

UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN STUDIES  
G. K. M.  
1969



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**UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN  
STUDIES**

079966

**IN  
ENGLISH**



079966

**No. IV**



**JAIPUR**

**November**

**1969**







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## CONTENTS

1. Shelley's Universe	... A.G. Stock	...	1
2. The Changing Concepts of "Charm" in Leslie Stephen's Criticism of George Eliot	... Brijraj Singh	...	7
3. The Mystical Element in the Plays of Christopher Fry	... R.L. Varshney	...	13
4. Oscar Wilde : A Poet	... L.L. Yogi	...	27
5. Johnson's Criticism of Milton's Scheme of Education	... Vinod Chandra Sharma	...	37
6. The <i>Theodicy</i> of Leibniz	... R.K. Kaul	...	45
7. Cultural difficulties in the Appreciation of English Literature for an Average Indian Student	... Sarla Prasad	...	57
8. The Problems Indo-Englian Literature is faced with	... A.L. Mishra	...	63
9. Hamlet's Heroic Identity and Submission to Providence : A Comparative Approach.	... Alur Janaki Ram	...	67
10. Collocation	... A.L. Shah	...	81
11. Pope on Satire	... R.K. Madaan	...	85
12. T.S. Eliot and Irving Babbitt— a Question of Critical Influence	... Mohit K. Ray	...	97
13. Keats' Sensuouness Re-defined	... Krishna Bagchi	...	103

## BOOK REVIEW

1. Root and Branch	... Hugo Wolfram	...	111
2. The Practice of Criticism	... D.W. Rawlinson	...	115
3. Arrows of Intellect	... Asloob Ahmad Ansari	...	119



### OUR CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Miss A.G. Stock**, Professor of English,  
University of Rajasthan (1961-65).  
Present address—19 Nassington Road,  
London, N.W.3
  2. **Mr. Brijraj Singh**, St. Stephen's College, Delhi,  
at present studying at Yale University.
  3. **Mr. R.L. Varshney**, Lecturer in English,  
NAS College, Meerut.
  4. **Mr. L.L. Yogi**, Lecturer in English,  
Government Bangur College, Didwana.
  5. **Mr. Vinod Chandra Sharma**, Lecturer in English,  
Government College, Nim-ka-Thana.
  6. **Mrs. Sarla Prasad**, Deptt. of English,  
Rajasthan University, Jaipur.
  7. **Mr. A.L. Mishra**, Lecturer in English,  
Government College, Kaladera.
  8. **Mr. Alur Janaki Ram**, Deptt. of English,  
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
  9. **Mr. R. K. Madaan**, Research Scholar, Deptt. of English,  
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
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## SHELLEY'S UNIVERSE

By

A G. STOCK

T. S. Eliot called Shelley an adolescent thinker. He never explained exactly what he meant by that, though he made it clear that he was enthralled by Shelley at an adolescent stage of his own thinking, which he later grew out of. Some of his later remarks seem to qualify the condemnation, for in one essay he calls Shelley the only poet of his time who might have been capable of doing justice to Dante—a considerable tribute, coming from Eliot and in *The Cocktail Party*, at a moment when the dialogue is clearly meant to be serious, the most authoritative character quotes a passage from *Prometheus Unbound*. It is true that Sir Harcourt Reilly is not his most conspicuously successful dramatic creation, but the intention comes through.

All the same his charge has stuck. Generations of Honours candidates have repeated it to show that they too have outgrown the illusions of youth; also perhaps as a let-out from trying to discover what Shelley actually thought. At the risk of being exposed as an adolescent thinker myself, I must confess that it seems to me to bear investigation. Shelley could write on occasion as badly as any other Romantic, but his intellectual vision made sense. In *Prometheus Unbound* he includes and organises a vast complexity of experience in a pattern which has not ceased to be relevant to the human condition. I hope these notes, which are no more than the outline of an interpretation, will show why I think so.

In the old story, when Jupiter usurped the throne of heaven and brought gods and men under his tyranny, Prometheus refused to submit. He championed mankind and stole for them the gods' prerogative of fire, which is the root of all the arts of civilization. For this, since he was an immortal and could not be killed, Jupiter chained him to a mountain peak to be tortured till he surrendered. Aeschylus' extant play ends here, with Prometheus, fettered but defiant, surrounded by the spirits of nature who sympathise with him but are helpless against the tyrant. In another play now lost, it appears that Pro-



metheus did surrender at last; or perhaps magnanimity on both sides brought a compromise: Jupiter acknowledged that absolute tyranny will never compel absolute submission, and Prometheus, who sought not lordship but a limit to oppression, gave way. In the politics of heaven as of earth, party conflict is resolved by constitutional government. But this is mainly conjecture, for no one knows what Aeschylus made of the surrender.

As Shelley saw the alignment of forces surrender was unthinkable. He begins with Prometheus where Aeschylus had left him, fettered but unconquered. He is a son of earth, brother to the elemental powers of air and sea and mountains, all of whom, with their mother the earth and with mankind, are victims of Jupiter's oppression. But the power of rebellion is not in them; they can do nothing but look on helplessly, grieving for Prometheus' sufferings and yet rejoicing in secret, because so long as he holds out Jupiter is not omnipotent.

When Prometheus retracts the course he had once hurled at Jupiter the reaction of his fellow-elementals is a wail of dismay. They think he is defeated; even the earth, who has faith in her son, can only hope that it is a momentary loss of nerve. In fact it is victory, not defeat. Prometheus in his three thousand years' agony has risen to a height where they cannot follow, because it belongs to the human spirit alone, and in learning to say, "I wish no living thing to suffer pain," he has achieved their deliverance as well as his own

Jupiter sends Mercury—an unwilling messenger, for the gods too are enslaved—to let loose the Furies on Prometheus. It is significant that with their arrival the other elementals, who have felt for his sufferings up to now, have no more to say. He is in a world of agony and exaltation they know nothing of. The ultimate torture the Furies can inflict is the contemplation of human history, with every noble impulse and heroic aspiration from Christ to the French Revolution perverted to a cause of evil. There is nothing here to mitigate the brutality of fact, no pretence that suffering is unreal, or is or can be compensated. Prometheus can only endure, and cries out—

Your words are like a cloud of winged snakes :  
And yet I pity those they torture not !

—and to this the Furies have no answer; they vanish. Only then,



when the agony has been endured without relief, the earth sends such consolation as she can, in the shape of spirits who, like Prometheus himself, have survived, inhabiting the human mind from unremembered ages before it was enslaved: negligible while Jupiter rules, they will still be there to take their rightful place when he falls.

Dramatically it would now seem right for Prometheus to burst his own bonds, overthrow Jupiter and seize the throne of heaven, but metaphysically this would make nonsense; it could only perpetuate the cycles of history. It is Demogorgon, the inevitable logic of consequence, the son of Jupiter's own misdeeds, who drags him down to the abyss. Prometheus the liberator cannot be a ruler; the cycle of violence will not end till the human spirit is governed from within by wisdom, not from above by fear. This is one of the great platitudes of the ages, but where except to a great platitude can any philosophy lead? Prometheus is reunited to his beloved Asia, and in the lyrical orgy of the last act they have both vanished. Presumably they are together somewhere, looking on contentedly while all nature shares in the redemption of man. Time is merged in eternity; the hours dance; even the moon is unfrozen, to blossom with new fertility in the love that showers on her from the earth.

I have passed over the figure of Asia, and much else in the poem, to concentrate on Prometheus and his relation to the other powers. It is oversimplifying the symbolism to see him as the spirit of man. Man is enslaved, and the forces of fear and hatred that enslave him are all summed up in Jupiter, so he too belongs to the spirit of man, but he rules nature as well as man. Prometheus is that in man which opposes him, but he is also a son of earth, one of the powers of nature, the only one able to rise above blind causality to foresight, forgiveness and universal vision, and until he comes to his full stature, nature is enslaved along with him. To the forces in conflict the mental and material worlds are one region.

The young Shelley, like the young Wordsworth before him, was committed to two allegiances not obviously the same, to Man seen in the light of revolutionary idealism, and to "Nature;" and like Wordsworth, though in his own very different way, he had to make them one if he was to write with the whole of himself. He knew the ecstatic Wordsworthian communion with the one life that rolls through all things; he wrote to Godwin that Pope's lines about "one



stupendous whole, Whose body Nature is, and God the soul" seemed to him more than great. But nature to Shelley was an intellectual vision as well as a feeling; it was the dynamic energy that drives and animates the universe, the play of electricity, the endless transmutation of forms, the Newtonian vision of matter, force and immutable law. Within this framework Christian theology with its man-centred story of the fall, the atonement, the redemption, and its personal God, made no sense, and it was necessary for his intellectual coherence to relate the mind of man to natural law.

*Queen Mab*, his first long poem, was an attempt to do just this, and is obviously immature. Edmund Blunden has remarked that it hangs together badly; he sees no point in transporting Ianthe to a remote pinnacle of the stellar universe to read her a lecture on social ethics. It seems to me that this is precisely the point: to see mankind as the infinitesimal in the infinite and to see moral idealism as conformity to natural law. The design is badly carried out for want not of intellectual structure but of the passionate imagination that should aminate the bones. Shelley, barely out of his teens, is attempting a synthesis which would have strained Lucretius.

But he did in the end bring man and nature together; in many of his later lyrics and in *Prometheus Unbound* their unity as parts of a whole is not so much argued as felt. He was more of a scientist than most poets, and saw nature habitually in terms of energy. He could anthropomorphise it without having to go back to obsolete cosmologies for his imagery. His cloud, for instance, makes meteorological sense, and he could think of the earth dancing about the sun as readily as the Psalmist could think of the sun rejoicing as a giant to run his course. Nature is "the one spirit's plastic stress"

Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight  
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear,  
And bursting in its beauty and its might  
Through trees and beasts and men, into the heavens' light.

But this was also close to the vision of the ancient Greeks, who did not, like the modern scientist, draw a line between nature and the intellect; for them the gods were forces equally at home inside and outside the human mind, as they were to Shelley. In the *Hymn of Apollo* the physical sun, who stands at noon upon the peak of heaven, can say



( 5 )

I am the eye with which the universe  
Beholds itself and knows itself diving.  
All harmony of intellect or verse,  
All poesy, all medicine, are mine.

—and in the *Ode to the West Wind* the wind at the beginning is driving dead leaves and at the end is driving the poet's dead thoughts, but there is no point where it changes from a wind into a metaphor. There is metamorphosis but not metaphor, where wind and mind belong to the one universe. The gods belong to it; even the dead belong, though there is some inexpressible barrier between them and the living. The earth is their mother and knows their language as she knows that of the living, but when the immortals ask about them, she can only answer enigmatically.

Death is the veil which those who live call life :  
They sleep, and it is lifted.

Shelley's universe is neither otherworldly nor materialist, for mind and matter are two sides of one primal reality. This is not an unrealistic way of grasping experience. History, since he wrote, has brought it home to us that human unwisdom can destroy the earth, and perhaps more than the earth, on a larger scale than any but a poet could have imagined. Nothing the imagination can picture is too frightening to be thought possible, and most of the horrors have their source in the appetite for power, or fear of it in others, or sheer lack of foresight. We control the earth, and use our power, regardless of its other inhabitants, to sterilize the land and poison the air and choke the fishes of the sea with oil because we are incapable of looking beyond our own immediate interests; and we hope to extend our dominion to the moon. But when a poet suggests as a corollary of all this that man regenerate might have no less power to bless and beautify the physical universe than man self-enslaved has to blast it, we tell him that he is not thinking like a grown-up.

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## THE CHANGING CONCEPTS OF "CHARM" IN LESLIE STEPHEN'S CRITICISM OF GEORGE ELIOT

By

BRIJRAJ SINGH

Leslie Stephen's criticism of George Eliot is contained in his article entitled 'George Eliot', first published in the *Cornhill Magazine*<sup>1</sup> and his book, also called *George Eliot*, in the English Men of Letters series.<sup>2</sup> Since there is a gap of over twenty years between these two works, it is to be expected that there will be some differences between the earlier and later critical comments. My purpose here is to examine Stephen's different uses of the word 'charm' so as to suggest the nature of the basic difference between the two critical studies.

In both the article and the book Stephen acknowledges the greatness of George Eliot. In the article, however, he tells us that the quality which above all makes her works great is the charm with which she invests the past age that her novels evoke :

Nobody has approached George Eliot in the power of seizing its ( i. e. of English country life ) essential characteristics and exhibiting its real charm. She has done for it what Scott did for the Scotch peasantry, or Fielding for the eighteenth century Englishman, or Thackeray for the higher social stratum of his time.<sup>3</sup>

This, Stephen tells us, is not just the opinion of one man but the generally accepted verdict on George Eliot :

There is one part of her writings ( i.e. the evocation of the charm of English country life ) upon which every competent reader has dwelt with delight, and which seems fresher and more charming whenever we come back to it.<sup>4</sup>

It is this charm that gives *Scenes from Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede* *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* "the unmistakable mark of high genius".<sup>5</sup> It is a lack of this charm that makes *Middlemarch*, for all its "comprehensive and vigorous intellect",<sup>6</sup> its 'high feeling and keen powers of observation',<sup>7</sup> inferior to these earlier novels.



In reading *Adam Bede*, we feel first the magic, and afterwards we recognise the power which it implies. In *Middlemarch* we feel the power, but we ask in vain for the charm.<sup>8</sup>

And again :

*Middlemarch* is undoubtedly a powerful book, but to many readers it is a rather painful book, and it can hardly be called a charming book to anyone.<sup>9</sup>

Now to say that for Stephen George Eliot's greatness lies in her charm may seem to be in direct contradiction to Stephen's own words little later in the essay :

George Eliot's early books owe their charm to the exquisite painting of the old country-life—an achievement made possible by a tender imagination brooding over a vanishing past—but, if we may make the distinction, they owe their greatness to the insight into passions not confined to one race or period.<sup>10</sup>

since he says here quite unambiguously that George Eliot's charm does not account for her greatness. However, the contradiction is really that of Stephen himself since to say (as he does) that it is her charm which makes her superior to all rivals and unique is to say also that it is the cause of her greatness.<sup>11</sup>

This contradiction is symptomatic of the way in which Stephen throughout the essay harps on two themes : George Eliot's "charm" and her humanity. It is almost as if his remark quoted above were a retraction of what he has said earlier in the essay. If so, Stephen does not go back *completely* on the position he took earlier in the essay, since towards the end<sup>12</sup> the earlier desire for "charm" is expressed again.

It is legitimate to expect that when a critic employs a word which is capable either of various interpretations or of producing misunderstandings he will define it for us to tell us just how he is using it. Stephen does not do this with his key word *charm*,<sup>13</sup> but only gives us some hints of what he may mean by it. He thus talks of George Eliot's "idyllic effects",<sup>14</sup> he praises her "exquisite painting of the old country life",<sup>15</sup> to which, he declares, her early novels owe their "charm", and he remarks about *Middlemarch* that in it :

the light of common day has unmistakably superseded the indescribable glow which illuminated the earlier writings.<sup>16</sup>



The critical vocabulary here may suggest a belletristic<sup>17</sup> approach, and this suspicion is borne out in his account of some of the scenes from these earlier works. What he remembers most vividly from them is neither the sufferings of Hetty, nor the author's imaginative rendering of Maggie Tulliver, nor the moral quality of the fable of Silas Marner, but scenes which are characterised by "exquisiteness". He talks, thus, of 'the inimitable Mrs. Poyser in her exquisite dairy',<sup>18</sup> and concludes :

Where shall we find a more delightful circle or quainter manifestations of human character, in beings grotesque, misshapen, and swathed in old prejudices, like the mossy trees in an old fashioned orchard, which, for all their vagaries of growth, are yet full of sap and capable of bearing mellow and tooth-some fruit.<sup>19</sup>

The uniqueness of the novelist lies, then, for Stephen, in her charm, which in owing to her ability to evoke a pastoral world which has now ceased to exist,<sup>20</sup> and to which we can escape from the problems of life :

We half wish that we could go back to the old days of stage-coaches and waggons and shambling old curates in 'Brutus wigs' preaching to slumbrous congregations enshrouded in high-backed pews, contemplating as little of the advent of railways as of a race of clergymen capable of going to prison upon a question of ritual.<sup>21</sup>

In a word, so long as Stephen talks of "charm" in his essay on George Eliot, he remains a critic in the tradition of belles-lettres.

This is not to say that he is unaware in this essay of other and perhaps more significant qualities of George Eliot as a novelist. He talks, thus, of her "high moral feeling and quick sympathy with true nobility of character."<sup>22</sup> There is much in the essay to suggest, however, that it is not these qualities but rather her charm which is central to his criticism of her works. In his book, on the other hand, the emphasis shifts from "charm" (in the sense in which it is used in the essay) to sympathy and the deep psychological insights of the novelist. This shift may be noted by comparing his comments, first in the essay and then in the book, on a passage from George Eliot which he quotes in both places. Here is the passage :

What were our little Tina and her trouble in this mighty torrent, rushing from one awful unknown to another? Lighter than the smallest centre of quivering life in the water-drop, hidden



and uncared for as the pulse of anguish in the breast of the tiniest bird that has fluttered down to its nest with the long-sought food, and has found the nest torn and empty.<sup>23</sup>

Stephen introduces this passage in his essay with the following words :

Everything is quietly set before us with a fine sense of its wider relations, and yet with a loving touch, significant of a *pathetic yearning* for the past, which makes the whole picture *artistically charming*. (*italics mine*)<sup>24</sup>

Commenting on it after he has quoted it, he says in the essay :

The *singular charm* springs out of the tender affection which reproduces the little world left so far behind and hallowed by the *romance of early association*. (*italics mine*)<sup>25</sup>

This, on the other hand, is how the passage is introduced in the book :

[It] is an indication of a profoundly reflective intellect, which contemplates the little dramas performed by commonplace people as parts of the wider tragi-comedy of human life.<sup>26</sup>

And this is how it is commented upon :

It is the constant, though not obtrusive, suggestion of the depths below the surface of trivial life which gives an impressive dignity to the work; and, in any case, marks the most distinctive characteristic of George Eliot's genius.<sup>27</sup>

These comments, when juxtaposed, speak for themselves.

Not that Stephen abjures the use of the word "charm" in the book. When he uses it, however, he not only defines it more closely than he ever attempted to do in the essay, but also gives it a meaning very different from the one in which it is used in the essay. In the book he agrees with George Eliot that to the artist aesthetics and ethics are really one,<sup>28</sup> saying, in effect, that there is no such thing as purely aesthetic beauty, for that beauty is no beauty which has no truth. Unless he recognises this, the artist cannot be said to possess charm, for :

the charm of all the great novelists . consists essentially in the power with which they have drawn attractive heroes, and won love both for them and their creators <sup>29</sup>

The implication is, of course, that charm is not just an ability to evoke the beauties of a bygone world, nor to bathe rustic characters in a



romantic light, but that it is essentially a moral quality, for, as Stephen himself says, in order that the artist might have a "sense of ...the beauty of character"<sup>30</sup> he must :

recognise the charm of a loving nature, of a spirit of self-sacrifice, or of the chivalrous and manly virtues.<sup>31</sup>

In a word, "charm", in the sense in which the word is used in the book, lies in the ability of the novelist to "bring out the beauty of the moral character fully."<sup>32</sup>

Q.D. Leavis has asserted<sup>33</sup> that the critical credo of the "Cambridge critics" is exemplified in the essays which go to form *Hours in a Library*. The "Cambridge critics" are critics with a deep moral commitment, and they have always been against a belletristic approach to literature. In the light of what I have said above, Mrs. Leavis' assertion cannot be held as being entirely valid, since from an examination of Stephen's use of the word "charm" it is clear that in his essay on George Eliot he wavers between a belletristic and a moral approach; it is only in his book that his commitment to a moral approach is seen to be complete.<sup>34</sup>

St Stephen's College,  
(Delhi.)

#### REFERENCES

1. *Cornhill Magazine* XLIII (1881) pp 152-68, reprinted in the New Edition of *Hours in a Library* Vol. III (London, 1892), pp. 207-36. All quotations from this essay are from this volume of *Hours in a Library*, and will henceforth be referred to simply as HL III.
2. Stephen, Leslie: *George Eliot*. London, 1902. All quotations from this work will be referred to simply as *G.E*
3. HL III pp. 213-4
4. Ibid., p. 213
5. Ibid., pp. 213, 214
6. Ibid., p. 232
7. Ibid., p. 232
8. Ibid., p. 232
9. Ibid., p. 229
10. Ibid., p. 222
11. It may be noted in passing that this is not the only contradiction in the essay: the remark (p. 231) that George Eliot's later books do not show any "defect of general power" is in sharp contrast to his feeling that there is "Something jarring and depressing in the later work" (p. 233), and that their success is complete only "up to a certain point" (p. 233), while in the earlier books we have a sense of "complete achievement". (p. 227).
12. HL III pp. 230, 232, 234.



13. Nor does Stephen make any distinctions between the nature of the charm of different novels of George Eliot in order to suggest the sense in which the word is being used. In this respect he may be contrasted with F.R. Leavis; "... if 'charm' prevails in *Adam Bede* and, as Henry James indicates, in *Silas Marner*,) there should be another word for what we find in *The Mill on the Floss*. The fresh directness of a child's vision that we have there, in the autobiographical parts, is something very different from the 'afternoon light' of reminiscence.....Instead of Mrs. Poyser and her setting we have the uncles and aunts" Leavis, F.R. : *The Great Tradition*. London, 1948. p. 38
14. HL III p. 215.
15. Ibid , p. 222.
16. Ibid., p. 229.
17. *Belletristic*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means "of or pertaining to belles-lettres" (*belle-lettres*, according to the O.E.D., is "now generally applied (when used at all) to the lighter branches of literature or the aesthetics of literary study.") The Dictionary quotes Pattison (1868 *Academ. Org.* 5. 293) : "We have risen above the mere belletristic treatment of classical literature," and Arnold (*Cornhill* XIII 290) "An unlearned belletristic trifler like me." I use the word to describe critical writing which does not engage in a rigorous examination of the issues at hand, or a critical approach which is more concerned with the pleasure, charm or entertainment that can be had from a work of literature than with a serious concern for its thought or content. In this sense the belletristic is contrasted with the moral approach. Above all, I use it to define an attitude, a quality of mind, which is revealed, for instance, in the use of words.
18. HL III p. 214
19. Ibid , p. 215.
20. Ibid. pp 213-4.
21. Ibid , p. 215.
22. Ibid., p. 233.
23. Ibid., p. 218 : *G.E.* pp, 62-3.
24. HL III p. 218.
25. Ibid , p. 219.
26. *G E* p. 62
27. Ibid , p. 63.
28. Ibid., p. 116.
29. Ibid., p. 117.
30. Ibid., p. 116.
31. Ibid., p. 116.
32. Ibid., p. 117.
33. Leavis, Q.D. : *Scrutiny* VII. p. 412.
34. I hope to study this point in further detail in a later paper.



## THE MYSTICAL ELEMENT IN THE PLAYS OF CHRISTOPHER FRY

*By*

R. L. VARSHNEY

Christopher Fry's drama is inseparable from God and His Creation. It fuses drama, poetry, religion, faith and philosophy together. Laughter and tears, Man and God, Mystery and Revelation, and this-worldliness and other-worldliness go hand in hand in his plays. He enables us to discover a correspondence between appearance and reality. Fry reminds us that "there are more things in heaven and earth...than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

Showing things of heaven and earth he establishes a link between the two. The People of South England say :

We have felt the joint action of root and sky, of man  
And God.<sup>1</sup>

Affairs to Fry are 'soul-size', the need of the time is 'exploration into God'. Earlier the drama was sick of the surface reality of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy—the play-wrights who were enacting what was happening not to them, but to others. But Fry began to speak of what was happening to him. He got nearer to the roots of a universal religion in the human soul by rendering a very broad meaning to religion.

His plays may be religious, but the religion in them cannot be equated with any particular sect or creed. It interprets a common understanding of man's relation to the reality behind, beyond and within. His genuine concern is not to convert but to articulate. He perceives and interprets rather than observes and dissects. His is a drama born out of creative imagination. It is a product of the spiritual need of the time. Its stress is on religious themes. It is concerned not with social or surface reality but with higher reality and with the mystery of the relationship of heaven and earth, of God and man. "Where other playwrights have staged their drama against a background of good and evil, the background which this



dramatist assumes is that of life's perpetual mystery."<sup>2</sup> Fry tries to open the eternal regions. He makes us peep into the worlds of thought and spirit, into eternity and into the bosom of God. He draws us deep into his dreams which are our dreams also. His plays make us realize the wholeness of our existence. They are made out of the universal stuff of human experience of the need of the soul for reconciliation, peace, pacification, forgiveness, redemption and atonement. They preach the gospel of chastity, obedience and virtue. Life, after all, is full of abundant happiness—this is the final impression left by a Fry-play.

His plays are spiritual excursions.<sup>3</sup> They are written out of the spiritual needs of our age.<sup>4</sup> He is proposing, as he himself says, "a theatre cloudy with insubstantial symbols and spiritual sea-wreck."<sup>5</sup> Fry is of the opinion that :

If the theatre can help us to see ourselves and the world freshly as though we had just rounded the corner into life, it will be what entertainment should be, a holiday which sets us up to continue living at the top of our bent...<sup>6</sup>

The dustcover of *The Dark is Light Enough* carries the following definitive comment by Fry :

There is an angle of experience where the dark is distilled into light : either here or hereafter, in or out of time : where our tragic fate finds itself with perfect pitch, and goes straight to the key which creation was composed in. And comedy serves and reaches out to this experience. It says, in effect, that groaning as we may be, we move in the figure of a dance, and, so moving, we trace the outline of the mystery.<sup>7</sup>

At another place he declares :

I wanted to move from division to unity, to say that we are all souls in one sorrow, and above all to say that the answer is in ourselves in each individual. Each individual has in him the elements of God...<sup>8</sup>

Thus he sets on to reveal the mystery of creation. In a speech delivered to the boys of his old school he defines what he means by this mystery of creation :

The usual meaning of mystery, nowadays, is a whodunit. We are presented with a corpse in Chapter One, with a succession of clues, and so, by a process of rational deduction, we arrive at the perpetrator of the corpse. But I am using the word mystery in the sense of a what-am-I ? In Chapter One we are



presented with a life; then with a succession of clues, intimations of a truth which is so profound that we can't reach it by rational deduction; and if we listen to those intimations...to what, indeed, is revealed of God...we end with a greater life than we began with. You will find in the story of man's life on earth great wonders perceived by the spirit, and unless you live by those wonders you live, it seems to me, in an ultimately aimless world...You may sometimes feel that the truth of God could with advantage, be more clearly audible to the human ear, more obviously visible to the human eye...<sup>9</sup>

Fry's chief object, therefore, is to offer 'a greater life', a life lived and perceived by the spirit. He wants us to feel 'the truth of God' more closely and clearly. Like his Moses he seems to be a 'go-between of God'. Whereas Shaw and Ibsen write of man in relation to society, Fry writes of man in relation to man's spirit. One of his Characters in *A Sleep of Prisoners* sums up the contrast between Fry's object and that of the naturalists :

I was on Business of the soul, my sweetheart, business of the soul.

\* \* \* \*

But my big brother  
Was on business of the flesh...<sup>10</sup>

He tends to justify the ways of men to God. His proposition is :

God : man. Man : God<sup>11</sup>

because

Affairs are now soul size.  
The enterprise  
Is Exploration into God.<sup>12</sup>

His main concern is beautifully expressed by Moses :

We're not concerned with hope,  
Or with despair, our need is something different :  
To confront ourselves, to create within ourselves  
Existence which cannot fail to be fulfilled.<sup>13</sup>

Fry's stress is always on religious and spiritual themes. *The Boy with a Cart* is about the relationship of man and God; *A Phoenix Too Frequent* present 'erotic life-force'; *The Firstborn* links 'the ways of men and the ways of God';<sup>14</sup> *The Lady's not for Burning* is an allegory 'denying the denial of life'; *Thor, with Angels*



shows the impact of the Divine on the human, it is 'concerned with man's gradual discovery of God';<sup>15</sup> *Venus Observed* is "life itself in its gayest aspect exhibited under Prospero's magic spell";<sup>16</sup> *A Sleep of Prisoners* is 'about peace, about Quietism, about the calm, lustful, unfearing confidence in God';<sup>17</sup> *The Dark is Light Enough* shows redemption of joy through death; and *Curtmantle* is 'the interplay of different laws : civil, canon, moral, aesthetic, and the laws of God.'<sup>18</sup> His plays show elemental forces in conflict. *The Boy with a Cart* presents 'the tussle of scepticism with faith';<sup>19</sup> *The Firstborn* of conscience with authority; *The Lady's not for Burning* of the life force with the death wish; *Venus Observed* of two kinds of love...the possessive and the disinterested; and *Thor, with Angels* of vengeance with mercy. While his tragedies are the demonstration of the human dilemma, his comedies are the comment on it.<sup>20</sup>

Fry's characters are also imbued in spirituality. Cuthman is a saint who, by his miracles, makes us feel as if he were not of this world. Moses represents "a movement towards maturity, towards a balancing of life within the mystery, where the conflicts and dilemmas are the trembling of the balance."<sup>21</sup> Tegeus-Chromis and Thomas Mendip are 'knights of infinity.'<sup>22</sup> Cymen is a Christian humanist. The Duke has a true moral structure built of forgiveness, understanding, and acceptance. Countess Rosmarin has the quality of divinity in whose neighbourhood lives make and unmake themselves. Becket is a great martyr, and the four prisoners of *A Sleep* are biblical protagonists.

One of the characters in *A Phoenix too Frequent* says that he is 'born to fill a gap in the world's experience'.<sup>23</sup> "His characters speculate about 'Creation', 'Time', 'Existence' and 'Death'. They allude to the physical origin of the world, the evolution of species, human genetics, and the reformation of value systems. They are looking for a sign of "Purpose". Frequently they despair. In six of the plays there are scenes at night when the heavens open. In one we meet an astronomer, a telescope and a solar eclipse. In all death occurs or is imminent. And in all there is concern for the unknown."<sup>24</sup>

When we go to watch his plays "We're going to see the world."<sup>25</sup> To Fry life has a great deal of mystery, amazement and wonder. It is, to use Doto's words,



...more big than a bed  
 And full of miracles and mysteries like  
 One man made for one woman, etcetera, etcetera.<sup>26</sup>

And it has 'such diversity' that the dramatist, the character and the audience

...sometimes remarkably lose  
 Eternity in the passing moment.<sup>27</sup>

In a radio broadcast Fry says that 'a mystery never ages.'<sup>28</sup> Through a speech of Dynamene too he reveals this mysterious nature of the universe :

A mystery's in the world  
 Where a little liquid, with flavour, quality, and fume  
 Can be as no other, can hint and flute our sense  
 As though a music played in harvest hollows  
 And a movement was in the swathes of our memory.<sup>29</sup>

It is due to this mysterious nature of the universe that one of Fry's characters utters :

How can I help it if I can't work myself up  
 About the way things go ? It's a mystery to me.<sup>30</sup>

Besides being mysterious the world is full of ills and evils too. To Fry's characters this "dizzy-dazzy world" of ours "made of morning sun and fog-spittle",<sup>31</sup> glittering with conflict as with diamonds"<sup>32</sup> is not always without evil. It is foul and cramp; it is "a bothering place...the world isn't heaven."<sup>33</sup> In Martina's phrase 'the universe is too ill-fitted and large'.<sup>34</sup> And to Henry

No men are fit to live, no one in the world !  
 Foul and corrupt ! foul and corrupt !  
 All contagious.<sup>35</sup>

And the reason of such a state is summarised by Thomas Mendip :

There sleep hypocrisy, porcous pomposity, greed,  
 Lust, vulgarity, cruelty, trickery, sham  
 And all possible nitwitty.....<sup>36</sup>

So Fry questions the creation :

What a mad blacksmith creation is  
 Who blows his furnaces until the stars fly upward  
 And iron Time is hot and politicians glow  
 And bulbs and roots sizzle into hyacinth



And orchis, and sand puts out the lion,  
 Roaring yellow, and oceans bud with porpoises,  
 Blenny, tunny and the almost unexisting  
 Blindfish; throats are cut, the masterpiece  
 Looms out of labour; nations and rebellions  
 Are spat out to hang on the wind...<sup>37</sup>

Ours is a contradictory world festering with 'damnation' :

We have given you a world as contradictory  
 As a female, as cabbalistic as the male,  
 A conscienceless hermaphrodite who plays  
 Heaven off against hell, hell off against heaven,  
 Revolving in the ballroom of the skies  
 Glittering with conflict as with diamonds...<sup>38</sup>

As for his characters so for Fry a human body has only 'a sentimental value'; it is flesh which 'weighs like a thousand years'; and a human being, to use Mendip's phrase, is 'a figure of vice and sin', or 'a cake of dung' born out of one night's sexual pleasure. Mendip begins to speculate on the futility of man's existence :

I defend myself against pain and death by pain  
 And death, and make the world go round, they tell me.  
 By one of my less lethal appetites;  
 Half this grotesque life I spend in a state  
 Of slow decomposition, using  
 The name of unconsidered God as a pedestal  
 On which I stand bray that I'm best  
 Of beasts, until under some patient  
 Moon or other I fall to pieces, like  
 A cake of dung.<sup>39</sup>

All major characters of Fry possess a feeling of resignation. They adopt, though temporarily, an indifferent attitude towards life. They want to ignore the universe. Mendip wants to be hanged; Dynamene comes to bury herself by the side of her husband's corpse; Moses risks his life for the sake of his fellow people; Guthman and Becket make martyrs of themselves; and Countess Rosmarin woos death happily. This feeling of resignation or disinterest can be well exemplified by the following speeches of Fry's characters :

1. I've just buried the world  
 Under a heavy snowfall of disinterest<sup>40</sup>.
2. Are you going to be so serious.  
 About such a mean allowance of breath as life is ?  
 We'll suppose ourselves to be caddis-flies.  
 Who live one day. Do we waste the evening.



Commiserating with each other about  
The unhygienic condition of our worm-cases ?<sup>41</sup>

3. Let the world.  
Go, lady; it isn't worth the candle.<sup>42</sup>
4. Life, forbye, is the way  
We fatten for the Michaelmas of our own particular  
Gallows.<sup>43</sup>
5. Be lost  
And then be found. It's an old custom of the earth  
From year to year.<sup>44</sup>
6. Ignore the universe if you can. Go on,  
Ignore it !<sup>45</sup>

Death to Fry's characters is 'a gateway to eternal rest'. They are not afraid of it. On the other hand, death to them is 'a new interest in life', 'a kind of love', or a 'rolling oblivion'. They are ready to 'humour' the 'annihilation' in the following manner :

1. That isn't death  
Lying on the ground.<sup>46</sup>
2. Death doesn't take  
Any doing at all.<sup>47</sup>
3. Death, be to me like a hand that shades  
My eyes, helping me to see  
Into the light.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the fact that the world is corrupt, foul, damned, hellish, and full of faults and weaknesses, Fry's characters seem to love it. "I love all the world", says Doto<sup>49</sup>. Similarly :

*Tegeus.* Certainly, just now I love all men.

*Doto.* So do I.

*Tegeus.* And the world is a good creature again.<sup>50</sup>

Mendip is prepared to live another span of life with Jennet; Dynamene remarries Tegeus; Richard Gettner tries to reconcile herself to Gelda; Becket and Henry seek friendship in spite of bitter enmity; Moses wants to save Ramases's life at all costs; the Duke abandons his beloved in his son's favour; Cymen seeks refuge and peace in Christianity; and Becket and Cuthman believe in the glorification of life. Hence Fry's attitude towards life is essentially one of acceptance. His plays are "marked with the assumption that life is a pleasure to be grasped, not a duty to be accepted".<sup>51</sup> His characters are real men and women having human weaknesses and virtues. They are



not angels or devils. They are, however, creatures of division. Moses presents but Fry's definition of men :

We're not enemies so much  
As creatures of division. You and I,  
Ramases, like money in a purse  
Ring together only to be spent  
For different reasons.<sup>52</sup>

The world after all is not incurable. But the people need to learn the art of living. "Surely there's no need for us to be/ The Prisoners of the dark?"<sup>53</sup> Fry's characters feel 'the desire to find a reason for living'<sup>54</sup>. One of them rightly says, "We have still to learn to live".<sup>55</sup>

In order to teach how to live Fry's characters attempt answers to questions such as : what is the aim of human life ?, how are we to learn to live ? what have we to do to be happy and joyous ? how can we save our soul ? His plays suggest a very practical way. In his view nothing is wrong with our 'body', but 'the soul' has gone to the dogs. Hence the revival of the soul is necessary :

A man must be let to have a soul to himself  
Or souls will go the way of tails.<sup>56</sup>

But

How can a man learn navigation  
When there's no rudder ? You can seem to walk,  
You there : you can seem to walk :  
But presently you drown.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore

Someone, you know,  
*Someone* must keep alive that quality  
Of living which separates us from the brutes;  
And I have proposed it should be I.<sup>58</sup>

Christopher Fry certainly keeps alive that quality of living which separates men from the brutes, sometimes through his heroes, sometimes through some other central figure, and at times through his chorus. He comes to our rescue and for our souls' salvation. Even in his first published play, *The Boy with a Cart* he proclaimed his faith. The mystic realization comes to him in the manner in which it came to St. Cuthman or to St. Becket. Here he gives an expression to his feeling :



It might have been because my stomach was empty  
 That I was suddenly filled with faith  
 Suddenly parcelled with faith like a little wain  
 In a good hay-season...<sup>59</sup>

Having been filled with faith, he stands at 'the four crossing roads of earth, heaven, time and eternity,'<sup>60</sup> and Time becomes his playmate. He assesses the insignificant position of man in this vast universe :

And what  
 Is a man ? Edgar what is a man ?  
 My main-child, what in the world is a man ?<sup>61</sup>

or

In life's name, what are we ?<sup>62</sup>

and

What's this divinity  
 Which with no more dexterity than a man  
 Rips up good things to make a different kind of good.<sup>63</sup>

Then he asks : "Where do we go from here ?" "What it is we're doing, what powers we are serving, or what is being made of us."<sup>64</sup>

This is how Fry hits upon mysticism. Even then he is unable to grasp infinity in his hand. He fails to make sense of it. In his search for continuity and connection among the various forms and forces of the universe, or of Nature, he finds only this much that the one end of the universe springs from God and the other within himself. So the chief purpose of his drama is to explore these two ends. But it is a very difficult task. He himself says :

We may be mortal. What then ? We may be immortal what then ? We are plunged into an existence fantastic to the point of nightmare, and however hard we rationalize, or however closely we dog the heels of science or wheel among the stars of mysticism, we cannot really make head or tail of it.<sup>65</sup>

And yet he has "a longing to be worked into the eternal fabric by God's love"<sup>66</sup> through the medium of his characters. Like his characters he discovers God, the star-figure in 'truth' and 'in the avalanche of snow,' and at last is able to discover Him :

The sound  
 Of God. It comes, after all, it comes.<sup>67</sup>



And

Behind  
The door that shuts us into life there is  
An Ear.<sup>68</sup>

That is why

You don't belong here,  
You see, you don't belong here at all.<sup>69</sup>

There are two ways to God : the way of Affirmation, and the Way of Negation. The Way of Affirmation is like Hindu 'Saguna Upasana' where God can be expressed, known and attained through symbols, images and approximations such as Truth, Beauty, Love, Mercy, Forgiveness. The Way of Negation is like Hindu 'Nirguna Upasana' where the mystic regards God as the Unknowable or ineffable. Fry's is the way of affirmation.<sup>70</sup> He asserts the glory of God through various symbols, images and approximations. God to him is Truth, Love, Light, and Mercy—any one or all of them. His acceptance of God is not anti-humanist. He does not neglect man in his love of God. His quest for Him is not painful or awful. On the contrary, his quest for God or his acceptance of Him is 'a simple act of opening the eyes.' In *The Dark is Light Enough* Fry imagines God as a woman. His submission to Him can be best expressed through Peter-Abel's words :

Deal me high, deal me low.  
Make my deeds  
My nameless deeds.  
I know and I do not know.<sup>71</sup>

Fry accepts, respects and reveres God. His characters are humble before Him. This humility and obedience is never slavish; it is innocence and purity and devotion. Another feature of Fry's mysticism is the amalgamation of various religious approaches. Moses is a Jew, Becket a Roman Catholic, Cuthman a Christian saint, and Cymen a pagan humanist. Fry may not be Jewish, Roman Catholic and Quaker all at once, yet he has profound esteem and regard for all of them. He believes that 'the good in human nature is even more powerful than evil,'<sup>72</sup> and that 'Good has a singular strength not known to evil.'<sup>73</sup> But people have to learn how good can be strong enough to break out of the possessing arms of evil. For this purpose philosophies like Sufism, Stoicism and Platonism are out of date, hence unproductive :



Is it your opinion  
 That no one believes who hasn't learned to doubt ?  
 Or, another thing, if we persuade ourselves  
 To one particular Persuasion, become Sophist,  
 Stoic, Platonist, anything whatever,  
 Would you say that there must be areas of soul  
 Lying unproductive therefore, or dishonoured  
 Or blind ?<sup>74</sup>

Man's salvation now lies in action and devotion, in the acceptance of life, not in its rejection. Fry wants to declare that the greatest happiness is the vision of God, that we should seek holiness not merely for the sake of external reward but also because it is the health of the soul. He wants to teach us that kindness and love for all is a decent way of living, that we should return good for evil and that there is strength in religion and power in God. He exhorts us to live by the rule of God which is Forgiveness, Mercy and Compassion :

We are afraid  
 To live by rule of God, which is forgiveness,  
 Mercy, and compassion, fearing that by these  
 We shall be ended. And yet if we could bear  
 These three through dread and terror and terror's doubt,  
 Daring to return good for evil without thought  
 Of what will come, I cannot think  
 We should be the losers. Do we believe  
 There is no strength in good or power in God ?  
 God give us courage to exist in God,  
 And lonely flesh be welcome to creation.<sup>75</sup>

So in his explorations into Creation and the Creator Fry is able to reconcile reason and duty, faith and joy, flesh and spirit. His plays mark the beginning of an attitude to the world, to religion and a new belief about its place in human life. Fry may be labelled as 'churchy' or 'Anglican' or 'religious' but his chief purpose is to give man 'a new meaning' and life its 'lost purpose'. He has, in fact,

...put men to a purpose who otherwise  
 would have had not the least meaning.<sup>76</sup>

He wants to take them 'peaceably into the wilderness for a space to find their good and become living men at last'.

In Fry's plays knowledge of God is sought through love and other virtues. While we read his dramas we feel ourselves initiated into divine mystery. We begin to explore 'the mystery of creation'. We feel as if we were reborn in eternity. Fry's object seems to be to



break through the world of history and time into that of eternity and themselves. To use Goethe's phrase, his plays are "the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings". They purge and illuminate; they also lead us to contemplate life within and without. They are not an escape from life. In them the characters try to attain a union with or absorption into God by love or self-surrender. They put into practice the following definition of mysticism :

I shall use the word mysticism to express the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage.<sup>77</sup>

But his mysticism is not the dream of a visionary; it is the realization and experience of a man living on this earth. In a letter, Fry states :

As far what you describe as the mystical element in the plays, it can only come (whatever there is of it) from what I have experienced of life.<sup>78</sup>

N.A.S. College,  
Meerut.

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*Abbreviations* : *The Boy*—Fry, *The Boy with a Cart* (Frederick), London, 1964; *Curtmantle*—Fry, *Curtmantle*, Oxford, 1961; *The Dark—The Dark is Light-Enough* (Oxford, 1957); *The Firstborn—The Firstborn* (Oxford, 1958), *The Lady—Fry, The Lady's not for Burning* (Oxford, 1961); *A Sleep*—Fry, *A Sleep of Prisoners* (Oxford, 1959); *Thor*—Fry, *Thor, with Angels* (Oxford, 1957); *Venus—Fry, Venus Observed* (Oxford, 1957).

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## OSCAR WILDE : A POET

by

L. L. YOGI

Wilde's poetic career ranges from a bookish start—the flamboyance of rhetoric and the echoes of his major predecessors—to an admirable mastery of craft. Finally he succeeds in distinguishing himself in the tradition of outstanding Victorian literature. One is far from asserting that he improves upon or furthers the tradition, he simply grasps it. It is in this context that he, as a poet, is different from T.S. : Eliot, Ezra Pound, Yeats, and such like authors who not only grasped the tradition but also added newer dimensions to it.

Wilde's assertion that he put his 'talent' into his art, holds true as far as it concerns his earlier poetry. His early poetry is tentative : it is one of statement and of experiment. The talented poet tries various techniques and forms with a view to perfecting his art. Most of his nature poetry was written much later in 1890 or so. Earlier he appears as a poet with little aesthetic initiation or ambition. He applies his acquired knowledge of Greek poetry to his art. He tries to catch something from Homer as is clear from his *Ravenna* in which 'the galleys' are "pine frost like"<sup>1</sup> and the islands are "wave curled"<sup>2</sup>, and the ships are "brass-beaked"<sup>3</sup>. In *Vita Nuova* the sea is "unvintageable"<sup>4</sup>.

He has many muses and many masters. Hesketh Pearson while introducing a volume of Wilde's poems comments, "he produces a volume of poems, which was almost an anthology of echoes"<sup>5</sup>. Marlowe, Milton, Keats, Arnold, Tennyson, Rossetti, William, Morris, Swinburne, Browning, and several contemporary poets influenced his work.

Oscar Wilde presented a copy of his poems to Oliver Elton who commented, "It is not that the poems are thin—and they are thin; it is not that they are immoral and they are immoral; it is not they are this or that and they are all this and all that; it is that they for the most part are not by their partitive father at all, but by a number



of better known and more reputed authors. They are in fact by William Shakespeare, by Philip Sidney, by John Donne, by Lord Byron, by William Morris, by Algernon Swinburne, and by sixty more..."<sup>6</sup> In Wilde's poetry, to quote Hesketh Pearson, his "phenomenal memory"<sup>7</sup> is evidenced more than his "individual inspiration"<sup>8</sup>. He has a general liking for anthologies. One has every reason to agree with Hesketh Pearson that Wilde "helped to popularize a number of other poets"<sup>9</sup>.

Occasionally he produced very effective passages in verse, "...a list of his lines would be nearly as long as the list of his echoes from other poets"<sup>10</sup>. In fact, he did not imitate the poets he named specifically in his critical writings. He thoroughly grasped Milton and Tennyson. *Ravenna* echoes Tennyson's *Lotus Eaters*, and *Mariana*; and *The Sphinx* in verse form is after the manner of *In Memoriam*.

There is virtuosity in his early poetry. *The Harlot's House* suffers largely from his verbal virtuosity. He descriptively defines the dances as Waltz, quadrille, saraband, etc. The poem appears like a series of tedious patches of impressionistic brushwork. As the poet gets matured, his poetry gets purged of florid descriptiveness and ornate vocabulary. He acquired in his later poetry the Baconian pith. In fact, his poetry emerged out of the pre-Raphaelite lush but ultimately he succeeded in imbibing pithy diction and eschewing the diffuseness of Victorian poetry.

That is why Wilde could not be very original. In this context, Richard Aldington's argument is very convincing. He argues, "...Wilde came at the end of the last great period of poetry. Within less than a century there had been William Blake, Robert Burns, Wordsworth, Walter Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, George Meredith, Rossetti, William Morris, Swinburne...It was impossible for so young a man, loving poetry as Wilde so clearly did, to write poems without reproducing what he admired so intensely." By the time Wilde composed *The Ballad* he had dissociated himself from his predecessors in the field. *The Ballad* sprang out of the intensity of his own harrowing experiences. He was original enough. He was not born as a mature poet in the sense in which Eliot was. Eliot could express as in *The Wasteland* an awareness of several eyes of history and of art. This technique was



akin to Wilde's. Wilde's poetry is a "dolphin torn gong tormented sea" and has echoes of many ages and many poets.

Wilde's earlier poetry in its technique is near sculpture or painting. His pen has the quality of a brush. The Spenserian quality in *Charmides* is noticable in verbal description :—

We two will sit upon a throne of pearl,  
And a blue ware will be our canopy.  
And at our feet the water-snakes will curl  
In all their amethystine panoply.<sup>12</sup>

His poems of the middle period are not merely occasional but also symbolic. His poetry gradually becomes informal with a symbolic or personal meaning. It seeks to imitate the styles of decadent or hybrid periods such as Hellenistic Greece, and Renaissance Spain with which Wilde felt deep affinity.

In *The Garden of Eros*, Wilde acknowledged his debt to many poets and painters. He not only refers to Keats, Shelley, and Byron, but also refers to William Morris, Rossetti, Burne Jones etc. His *Glykipikrop Eros* is quite Keatsian. He refers to Morris.

Morris, our sweet and simple Chaucer's child  
Dear inheritor of Spenser's tuneful reeds<sup>13</sup>

He calls the poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti "The seaph Gabriel,—whose double laurels burn with deathless flame to light thine (of the Spirit of Beauty) altar."<sup>14</sup> He refers to Burne Jones "who saw Old Merlin in Vivien's snare.

He refers to Burne Jones :—

...who old Merlin in Vivien's snare  
And the white feet of angels coming down the golden hair.<sup>15</sup>

Wilde evokes mythical antiquity in some of his poems. His vision of Arcady is dominant in *The Burden of Itys*, *Athanasia*, *Charmides*, *The Garden of Eros*, *Phedre*, *Pan*, etc. In *The Burden of Itys*. "...rustic lovers stay at eve in happy simple talk,"<sup>16</sup> and "A troop of laughing boys in jostling throng"<sup>17</sup> cheers and "the swinked shepherd drives his bleating flock Back to their wattled sheep-cotes..."<sup>18</sup> In the *Garden of Eros*, he refers to "the old half-withered reeds that waved in Arcady."<sup>19</sup> To *The Phedre*, he says,



Thou should'st have gathered reeds from a greenstream  
 For Goat-foot Pan's shrill piping, and have played  
 With the white girls in that Phaeacian glade..."<sup>20</sup>

Wilde's double villanelle on Pan is very interesting :—

O goat-foot God, of Arcady.  
 This modern world is grey and old,  
 And what remains to us of thee ?  
 No more the shepherd lads in glee  
 Throw apples at thy wattled fold,  
 O goat-foot God of Arcady.

Nor through the laurels can one see  
 Thy soft brown limbs, thy beard of gold,  
 And what remains to us of thee ?

And dull and dead our Thames would be,  
 For here the winds are chill and cold,  
 O Goat-foot God of Arcady.

Then keep the tomb of Helice,  
 Thine Olive-woods vine-clad wold,  
 And what remains to us of thee ?

Though many an unsung elegy  
 Sleeps in the reeds our rivers hold,  
 O Goat-foot God of Arcady :  
 Ah, what remains to us of thee ?

2

Ah, leave the hills of Arcady,  
 The satyrs and their wanton play,  
 The modern world hath need of thee.

No nymph or Faun indeed have we  
 For Faun and nymph are old and grey.  
 Ah, leave the hills of Arcady;

This is the land where liberty,  
 Lit grave-browed Milton on his way,  
 This modern world hath need of thee;

A land of ancient chivalry,  
 When gentle Sidney saw the day,  
 Ah, leave the hills of Arcady.

This fierce Sea-lion of the sea,  
 This England lacks some stronger lay,  
 This modern world hath need of thee;

Then below some trumpet land and free,  
 And give thine oaten pipe away,  
 Ah, leave the hills of Arcady.  
 This modern world hath need of thee.<sup>20</sup>



All this is written with a deep nostalgic sense. He is trying hard to get a glimpse of Arcady but the world had gone grey due to rapid scientific progress and growing materialism. Wilde has to seek refuge in Graeco-Roman antiquity. If he had been for science, he would not have created artificially pastoral scenes. He is imitating Bion, Moschus, Lucian, Virgil and Ovid. But at the root of all this flowery luxuriance lies his nostalgia and idealism. Since he was obsessed with 19th century philistinism, he turned to neo-Gothic and Pre-Raphaelite reconstruction of the Chivalrous Middle Ages. This is evidenced in *The Ballade de Marguerite* and *The Dole of the King's Daughter*. Wilde revels in this world to satisfy his aesthetic urge. Similar is the note in Rupert Brooke's *Grantchester*. Both Wilde and Rupert Brooke, want to gather and permanently capture what the world is losing so rapidly. Wilde has T.S. Eliot's.. 'notion of some infinitely gentle/Infinitely suffering thing.'<sup>21</sup> This note is so significant that his philosophic poem *Humanitad* has a bucolic opening.

Wilde could never have written *Les Fleurs du Mal* because his conscience was harrowed. He imagined "the shameful secret quests"<sup>23</sup> of his own private life, he turned to "his own crucifix in his poetry if not in life."<sup>24</sup> He attempts towards the end to escape from the phantom he so zealously summons at first in *the Sp'inx*.

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance had long been the favourite themes of the Victorians—Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold etc. and then of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and then of the School of Ruskin and Pater. Wilde, too, presents a flamboyant vision of the Renaissance. The element is melodramatically expressed in the play *The Duchess of Pandua*; also the nostalgic note is recurrent in *To Milton*, *A Vision*, *Quantum Mutata*, *Ave Marie*, *Gratia Plena*, *Ravenna*, and other poems, Wilde very seriously regrets the loss of heroic values.

"...but we burnt out and cold,  
See Honour smitten on the cheek..."<sup>25</sup>

Ultimately he rejects the sinister Muse of "poisonous melodies"<sup>26</sup> and helplessly exclaims in deep spiritual anguish :—

You make my creed a barren sham, you wake foul dreams of  
sensual life,  
And Atys with his blood-stained knife were better than the  
thing I am<sup>27</sup>



Wilde kills Baudelaire in his poetry. The poem acquires a macabre meaning as symbols of bestial passions crowd round the Sphinx. "The beautiful and silent Sphinx"<sup>28</sup> becomes a "gongless, tongueless ghost of sin crept through the curtains of the night"<sup>29</sup> and it obsesses him with the bitterness of awful past and haunts the "shifting gloom"<sup>30</sup> of the poet. It is strange that *The Sphinx* which begins with a fascinated invocation of the sphinx, ends with a strident rejection of her.

Wilde who stood for romance, pleasure and laxity in life as in his art, withdraws doggedly from this Epicureanism. The "chariot wheels of passion"<sup>31</sup> have "wrecked" and "stranded"<sup>32</sup> him. There is a sombre note of defection in his exclamation: "I pass into a life more barren more austere".<sup>33</sup> He withdraws his "soul in sweet reluctance"<sup>34</sup> professing, "I am Hers who loves not any man".<sup>35</sup> The poet reaches Hamlet's state of mind—"Man delights not me nor woman either." He seeks refuge in the white and stainless Gorgonian bosom rather than the "arched splendour of those brows Olympian".<sup>36</sup> In the poem *Camma* he declares, "I am grown sick of unreal passions".<sup>37</sup> In the *Harlot's House* the dance is "wearied of the waltz"<sup>38</sup> and "the shadows"<sup>39</sup> cease "to wheel and whirl".<sup>40</sup> In the *Harlot's House*, "the ghostly dancers spin"<sup>41</sup> and further he describes "the dead are dancing with the dead".<sup>42</sup> The appeal is rather sensual as one reads, "Love passed into the house of lust".<sup>43</sup> The shrieks are those of Jokanaan and the dancer is Salome. The inner warps and woofs of Wilde's imagination got poetically associated with his long loved theme of Salome. It is lyrical intensity which haunts his play *Salome*. *Salome* in its poetical appeal is quite an expansion of the notions of *Harlot's House*. Wilde deals with the theme of lust quite at ease in *Salome*. "The sensual" comes as naturally to Wilde as "the sensuous" comes to Keats.

Wilde's prose poems are not very significant except in that they place him much nearer some "crude and popular writers such as Khalil Gibran"<sup>44</sup>. All his prose poems, if expressed with Baconian pith would be mere epigrams. Roditi calls his prose poems "expanded epigrams".<sup>45</sup> The poems are his reflection on Biblical values. But the 'lyrical atmosphere of true poetry'<sup>46</sup> is missing. The prose poems were obviously written for children. He wanted to please the British Child just as he wanted to ridicule and annoy the 'Philistines'.



Oscar Wilde most singularly anticipates the moderns such as T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden. "The pale woman" in, *Impression Du Matin* comes nearest the lady typist in the *Wasteland* :

She turns and looks a moment in the glass  
Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass,  
Well now that's done, and I'm glad it's over.<sup>47</sup>

It anticipates W.H. Auden's, *Miss Gee*. It can be compared with the woman in the *Preludes* :—

And when all the world came back,  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where,  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.<sup>48</sup>

In *Impression Du Matin*

But one pale woman all alone,  
The daylight kissing her vain hair,  
Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,  
With lips of flame and heart of stone.<sup>49</sup>

This "pale woman all alone" is not so much Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* as she is Miss Gee or the typist in *The Wasteland*.

In its urban setting and images *Impression Du Matin* is very much like Eliot's *The Preludes*.

The yellow fog came creeping down  
The bridges, till the houses' Walls  
Seemed changed to shadow...

Then suddenly arose the clang  
of waking life, the streets were stirred  
With country wagons : and a bird,  
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.<sup>50</sup>

In the *Preludes*, one reads

The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust trampled street  
With all its muddy feet that press  
To early coffee-stands.  
With the other masquerades  
That time resumes.<sup>51</sup>



The fog image in *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock* is quite interesting in this context :—

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panes.  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window panes.<sup>52</sup>

When one reads in Wilde's *Impressions* (two) the lines :—

The muffled steer man at the wheel,  
Is but a shadow in the gloom,  
And in the throbbing of engine foam  
Leap the long rads of polished steel.<sup>53</sup>

One suddenly thinks of Walt Whitman's *Locomotive* or Eliot's "Human engine" and "taxi throbbing" and "trilling wire". Also *Le Jardin des Tuileries*, in its images anticipates Eliot's *Animula* and in Wilde's own works gets vaguely connected with *The Selfish Giant*.

Wilde entertained the notion that something was singularly missing in his age and he felt that his soul was not fit for nineteenth century England. In *Theoretikos* he wrote :—

For this vile traffic house, where day by day  
Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart,  
And the rude people rage with ignorant cries  
Against an heritage of centuries.

It mars my calm : wherefore in dreams of Art  
And loftiest culture I would stand apart,  
Neither for God, nor for his enemies.<sup>51</sup>

His countrymen roused his indignation. He called them 'Philistines' as Matthew Arnold did. Wilde had the awareness that his was a century which appeared to have made a lot of progress due to industrialization, and rapid technical advancements. But Wilde had a notion that the century anticipated bloodshed, wars, revolutions, and unhappy socio-political upheavals. This very belief led him to pessimism, and in his later work this note grew very profound. He, therefore, proposes his ideals in the Golden Ages of Hellenism or of Humanism. Needless to say, the most ambitious of his aesthetic poems are on Hellenic themes such as *Humanitad*, *Panthea*, *Charmides*, *Burden of Itys*, *The Garden of Eros*. *The Garden of Eros* is an expanded Keats's ode *To Nightingale*, splendid specimen of earlier poetry. He effaces the rhetorical element. An apologetic note sets in as in *De Profundis*. There is no bold assertion but immense humility. *The Ballad* in form and meaning evidences Wilde's artistic



“ability to integrate the raw material of individual experience into literature and poetry.”<sup>55</sup> In its form it approximates Coleridge’s *The Ancient Mariner* and Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* but in feeling it far transcends them. *The Ballad* celebrates Wilde’s departure from the style of his earlier poetry. In the *Ballad* he becomes less elaborately ornate. His iconography changes. This is a shift from self-assured loftiness to a far more lyrical and symbolic expression with which he handles the vast theme of love, guilt, retribution deeply rooted in his individual experience. “Not since the first publication of *The Ancient Mariner* have the English public been proffered such a weird, enthralling and masterly ballad narration,”<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to note that lady Constance Wilde considered *The Ballad*, ‘exquisite’<sup>57</sup> in a letter to Carlos Blacker on 4th March, 1898, Oscar Wilde referred to *The Ballad of the Reading Goal* as a Sonnet out of ‘skilly’<sup>58</sup> in a letter to Leonard Smithers on March 15, 1898. Wilde again made a similar comment in a letter to Will Rothenstein in February 1898. The theme never wanders off as it does in *Humanitad*. In *The Ballad*, there is a self inflicted wound. *The Ballad* embodies his swan song experience, the wound is both symbolic and imaginary. Here Wilde anticipates Yeats.

Ultimately, his mature poems are delicate and simple. There is deep intellectual content. His later poetry touches most fully his moral conflicts, and his aesthetic principles. In *The Harlot’s House*, *the New Remorse*, Wilde shows his ability to compose. To sum up his mature poetry constitutes a body of poems on the themes of sin, suffering, remorse and shall we say Wilde attempted to write *Les Fleurs du Mal* in English Literature “with much of Baudelaire’s complex quality as opposed to Swinburne’s vagueness.”<sup>59</sup>

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## JOHNSON'S CRITICISM OF MILTON'S SCHEME OF EDUCATION

*by*

VINOD CHANDRA SHARMA

Johnson's *Life of Milton* is full of wise remarks on the art of teaching. He rejects the views of the early biographers of Milton who said that Milton performed 'wonders' in the art of teaching for teaching is a very slow process. "Nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of his horse."<sup>1</sup> The teacher should take an account of the child's capacity to learn and direct his efforts accordingly. The aptitude of a child should be carefully studied and his interest always considered in teaching. Johnson recognizes pleasure and attention as two essential pre-requisites of learning. No progress in studies can be expected if learning becomes burdensome. "What is read with delight is commonly retained, because pleasure always secures attention: but the books which are consulted by occasional necessity, and perused with impatience, seldom leave any traces on the mind."<sup>2</sup> Novelty attracts attention and gives a sense of delight. There is no novelty about rules which children are supposed to assimilate thoroughly. "Multitudes of definitions, rules and exceptions" "fatigue the attention and burden the memory." Rules may be necessary in teaching but Johnson prefers a play-way method of teaching. No exercise administered to students should be painful for an "exercise is labour without weariness". "Attention is something less than anxiety, an exercise is something less than labour."<sup>3</sup>

Johnson was a teacher for a year and a half, and if the account of Hawkins<sup>4</sup> and Boswell<sup>5</sup> can be believed, he was, like Milton, an unsuccessful teacher. While reviewing Milton's career as a school teacher, he points out the pains a school teacher has to take in order to instruct students. "Every man, that has undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advance he has been able to make and how much patience in requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension."<sup>6</sup>



The purpose of education is both religious and moral. It should not aim merely at the study of external nature or the intellectual development of an individual. Man is the epitome of the universe and the supreme creation of God. A mere intellectual is an abstraction. Johnson did not think much of those who studied only nature and practised cloister'd virtue. The two important things in life are action and conversation. A real education should help us in both: 'whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong.'<sup>7</sup> His writings are full of the instances where otherwise good scholars have been quite unsuccessful in life.<sup>8</sup> 'Learning without application is useless:' 'he that has collected his knowledge in solitude, must learn its application by mixing with mankind'.<sup>9</sup> In *Rasselas* Imlac warns the prince that he should not forget to live.<sup>10</sup> Education teaches man to lead a better life. "Retreat from the world is flight rather than conquest."<sup>11</sup> Our life affords a vast scope for the observation of men and manners. To Susannah Thrale Johnson wrote; 'When you have lived longer and considered more, you will find the common course of life very fertile of observation and reflection. Upon the common course of life must our thoughts and our observation be generally employed.'<sup>12</sup> Conversation affords a great pleasure. Education helps us by providing topics for conversation. Self-centredness and "incommunicative taciturnity" should be deplored in children.

So Johnson believes that the purpose of education is both religious and moral. A knowledge of right and wrong is very useful in life and is an indispensable part of education. 'Prudence and justice are virtues, and excellences of all times and of all places : we are perpetually moralists but we are geometricians by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary, our speculations upon matter are voluntary and at leisure.'<sup>13</sup> Thus Johnson puts the knowledge of human nature in opposition to the knowledge of natural sciences. Being a humanist, he subordinates the study of the natural sciences to the study of the humanities. 'Life is not the object of science'<sup>14</sup> he said. That may be studied but the study of subjects such as languages, religious history and ethics should be the main concern of education. "To man is permitted the contemplation of skies, but the practice of virtue is commanded."<sup>15</sup> To inculcate virtue in children those subjects should be carefully studied "that



supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation."<sup>16</sup> Poets, orators and historians who teach moral virtues and prudence should form a major part of curriculum.

## II

Milton and Johnson agree about the purpose of education. "The end of learning," according to Milton, "is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright".<sup>17</sup> Besides this religious purpose, education also helps in bringing up children fit for the duties of life. "A complete and generous education fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war."<sup>18</sup> Thus Milton like Johnson considered the purpose of education to be religious though he differed widely from Johnson on the curriculum prescribed for children.

Before discussing Milton's curriculum in detail, it would be proper to point out the significance of one of the remarks of Johnson criticizing Milton's scheme of studies. In the life of Milton Johnson says "but the innovators whom I oppose are turning attention from life to nature."<sup>19</sup> This remark seems to sum up Johnson's criticism of Milton's scheme of study. What exactly is this "innovation" that Johnson refers to ?

This criticism refers to the introduction of "modern" studies which were being introduced in the 17th and 18th century English schools. Suggestions to include these new subjects in the curriculum of schools and universities were advanced by men like William Petty, Milton, Cowley and Locke. William Petty in "The advice of William Petty to Mr. Samuel Hartlib for the Advancement of some particular parts of learning" (1647-48) suggested the establishment of a trade school or a Gymnasium Mechanical. Milton in "Of education" (1644) included a large number of ancient and "modern" subjects in the curriculum of his academy. In his discourse "On the likeliest way to remove Hirelings out of the Church", Milton suggested that preachers of the church should be taught a trade to make them economically independent. Cowley in "Of Agriculture" (1660) proposed the establishment of an agriculture college in every university, whose professors should be chosen, not for their critical sagacity, but for their practical experience. Locke in "Some Thoughts



Concerning Education" (1690) recommended many practical subjects for his gentleman learner.

Thus we see that proposals to teach subjects of a specialized nature were coming up and sometimes they found a place in the curriculum of the educational institutions. Now Johnson was a great supporter of liberal education and thought these "innovations" dangerous. In his scheme of education for the Edial Academy, he mentioned only Greek and Latin poets and writers. Johnson thought that these "innovations" reflected the perfect utilitarian spirit of his time and their influence was degrading. Anything that smacks of utilitarianism he disapproved of. In *Rambler* No. 85, Johnson refers to Locke's "recommendations of a trade to all men of ranks and profession". Locke recommended some trade for relaxing the mind after a long pursuit of intellectual activity. Criticizing Locke's views, Johnson says that by following mean occupations, the mind may also acquire meanness. "There is little reason for expecting frequent conformity to Locke's precept, that it is not necessary to inquire whether the practice of mechanical art might not give occasion to petty emulation and degenerate ambition and whether if our divines and physicians were taught the lathe and the chisel, they would not think of their tools than their books."

Criticizing Milton and Locke as educationists, Johnson made the following observation :—

Education in England has been in danger of being hurt by two of its great men, Milton and Locke. Milton's plan is impracticable, and I suppose has never been tried..."<sup>20</sup>

I shall limit my discussion to Johnson's remarks on Milton only and try to see how far they are justified.

For the knowledge of religion students in Milton's academy were required to study the scriptures every evening and on Sundays, Greek, Hebrew, Syrian and Chaldee are also included in the curriculum that the students might study the scriptures in the original tongues.

Milton includes important Latin and Greek authors in the curriculum to give these students a real acquaintance with classical literature. Grammar does not occupy students for a longer time. The purpose of the study of the classical authors is to inculcate virtues in



students. "But here the main skill and ground work will be, to temper them such lectures and explanations upon every opportunity, as may lead and draw them in willing obedience enflam'd with the study of learning, and the admiration of virtue, stirr'd up with high hopes of living to be brave men, and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages."<sup>21</sup>

Milton suggests that this moral training may be imparted by "mild and effectual perswasions" but it is "chiefly by his own example" that the teacher will try to bring them up as "the stately pillars of the state". In teaching Arithmetic to children Milton, like Plato, endorses the use of games. Quintilian, Milton was aware, also advocated this broader way of amusements and games in education. Another important method of education is to direct learning from "things" to "abstractions" from the "Orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature" "to the knowledge of God and things invisible." By the study of Geography, Trigonometry, Fortification, Architecture, Engineering, Navigation and Physiology the students would make an acquaintance with "sensible" things. From them they would proceed to "regaining to know God aright". He would like his students to have some knowledge of agriculture, economics, meteorology and medicine. The study of classical comedy is necessary for "the knowledge of personal duty." At a mature stage they would study the two subjects of the trivium—rhetoric and logic. Grammar, Milton, had already introduced in the first part of their studies. Now his students would be mature enough to study politics, rhetoric and logic. So the knowledge of military science would also be necessary. He wished his students to learn the use of weapons that they might lead armies in the time of war.

Here it might be observed that nobody can learn all these subjects in a limited period of nine years as Milton intended. It is inconceivable how a student between "twelve and one and twenty" can learn six languages, all classical authors, and all professions. Such a scheme of study may have been fit for a man of Milton's calibre but can never be suitable for an ordinary student. The two modern writers on education Curtis and Boulwood, agree with Johnson's point of view that Milton had no knowledge of the requirements of an ordinary student. 'It is not surprising to find that his main writings on education show that he has no real appreciation of the qualities and



capacities of ordinary children.'<sup>22</sup> Even Milton's contemporaries realised that his writings on education were impracticable. Cheyney Culpeper, a gentleman interested and active in education reform wrote to Samuel Hartlib in 1645.

There are some good sparklings in his letter of education, but there is no descending enough into particulars but rather a genera notion of what experience only can perfect.<sup>23</sup>

Education to Johnson meant a study of classical and probably, even modern English writers such as Shakespeare, who portray human nature, and the study of writers who deal with moral truths. Johnson preferred a restricted curriculum. "All ancient authors, Sir, all manly," Johnson said of his own education. It was an education which reinforced a responsible sense of life and care for an enlightened coherent civilization. His curriculum may seem narrow because of it. But he had a wider sense of humanity which we find diffused throughout his writings: 'Mankind is one vast republic where every individual receives many benefits from the labours of others which, by labouring in his turn for others, he is obliged to repay.'<sup>24</sup> Education as fulfilment of this promise has been reiterated by many educational thinkers from time to time. Johnson, of course, was one of them.

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## THE *THEODICY* OF LEIBNIZ

by

R. K. KAUL

Mr. C. R. Morris in his introduction to the *Philosophical Writings* of Leibniz informs us that :—

There exists at present no complete edition of the works of Leibniz....There is, however, in course of preparation, a complete edition of the works of Leibniz...under the direction of *Akademie der Wissenschaften* of Berlin. It is intended to consist of forty quarto volumes...<sup>1</sup>

The topics of his works are political, historical, philosophical, mathematical, scientific and technical, most of them in the form of correspondence. Of these I am acquainted only with the works which might be called philosophical and theological.

Leibniz owes his high reputation to his discovery of the Differential Calculus. As a philosopher he has been praised by Russel for his contribution to modern logic. My concern in this paper, however, is with what Russel regards as the worst parts of his philosophy viz. "those which most nearly concern human life."<sup>2</sup>

The *Theodicy* is not much read these days. Its reputation is not very high. William James, for example, tells us that :—

Leibniz was a rationalist mind, with infinitely more interest in facts than most rationalists can show. Yet if you wish for superficiality incarnate, you have only to read that charmingly written *Theodicee* of his, in which he sought to justify the ways of God to man, and to prove that the world we live in is the best of possible worlds.<sup>3</sup>

In my defence I could say that the *Theodicee* (1710) alone of all his works was published in Leibniz's lifetime. There is a better reason for studying the *Theodicy*. For the historian of ideas it is a very important document. Prof. Lovejoy devoted a full chapter of his famous *Great Chain of Being*<sup>4</sup> to a discussion of Leibniz and Spinoza. My reason, however, for examining this work is that it is very important for an understanding of two important writers of the



eighteenth century viz. Pope and Voltaire. With Pope's *Essay on Man* it bears a close resemblance. As for Voltaire, many of his works and notably *Candide* were written with the intention of ridiculing Leibniz's *Theodicy*.

I might point out that Pope's *Essay* and Leibniz's *Theodicy* were not the only attempts made in the age of the Enlightenment to defend God. There were numerous other attempts made including one by an obscure English writer called Some Jenyns whose work is remembered largely because it gave Dr. Johnson a memorable occasion for refuting it.

It will have been noted that William James called Leibniz a rationalist. In spite of Leibniz's scientific curiosity it must be stated that his rationalism was anti-empirical in temper. At the outset Leibniz distinguishes between two kinds of truths. Truths, according to him, may be either necessary or positive. Of necessary truths the examples are metaphysics and geometry. *Theodicy* does not belong to this branch of knowledge. Of positive truths there are two varieties—those which we learn from experience or *a posteriori* and those which we learn by reason or *a priori*.<sup>5</sup> Now Leibniz discards *a posteriori* reasoning completely. His reasoning is purely *a priori*, i.e., to use his own words "by considerations of the fitness of things". In his *Monadology* he states quite clearly :—

We are merely empiricists as regards three-fourths of our actions. For example, when we expect it to be day tomorrow, we are behaving as empiricists, because until now it has always happened thus. The astronomer alone knows this by reason.

But it is the knowledge of necessary and eternal truths which distinguishes us from mere animals, and gives us *reason* and the sciences, raising us to knowledge of ourselves and God. It is this in us which we call the rational soul or *mind*<sup>6</sup>.

By way of qualification it should be pointed out that the term "empiricist" was equated with a "quack" in seventeenth and eighteenth century usage. But so far as Leibniz is concerned he was opposed to the spirit of empirical science. For example, in his correspondence with Clarke he opposed the experimental discoveries of M. Guericke of Madgeburg and defended Aristotle and Descartes for refusing to "admit the existence of a true void."<sup>7</sup>



Most thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were content to demonstrate the existence of God with the help of *a posteriori* reasoning. When they saw the order in nature, the regularity of the cycle of seasons and the laws of motion and gravitation they concluded that the universe must have been created by a divine intelligence.

Leibniz, however, chose for the most part to infer the nature of the universe or God's creation from the nature of the Creator. Because God is all wise and all powerful God must have created a world that is perfect. To use his own words :—

this supreme wisdom, united to a goodness that is no less infinite, cannot but have chosen the best (i.e. of worlds)...if there were not the best among possible worlds, God would not have produced any...there is an infinitude of possible worlds among which God must needs have chosen the best, since he does nothing without acting in accordance with a supreme reason.<sup>8</sup>

This cosmic optimism was parodied by Voltaire in *Candide* so memorably that most people know of Leibniz only through the parody. Voltaire's caricature of Leibniz is Dr. Pangloss. He is introduced in the following manner :—

Pangloss taught metaphysico-cosmolo-nigo-logy. He proved incontestably that there is no effect without a cause...

'It is proved', he used to say, 'that things cannot be other than they are, for since everything was made for a purpose, it follows that everything was made for the best purpose. Observe: our noses were made to carry spectacles, so we have spectacles... And since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all the year round. It follows that those who maintain that all is right talk nonsense; they ought to say that all is for the best.'<sup>9</sup>

In terms of human experience Leibniz can be made to look ridiculous. He therefore wisely stuck to the metaphysical plane. But what is the value of a philosophy that accounts for moral and physical evil in purely metaphysical terms ?

Scholars have pointed out that this doctrine of Leibniz has an ancient lineage. It goes back ultimately to Plato's *Timaeus*. We do not find, however, Plato's account as unsatisfactory. One reason is



that Timaeus in Plato's dialogue of that name presents the creation of the universe as a myth :—

Let me tell you then why the creator made this world of generation. He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men: God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable. Wherefore also finding the whole visible sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other. Now the deeds of the best could never be or have been other than the fairest; and the creator, reflecting on the things which are by nature visible, found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole; and that intelligence could not be present in anything which was devoid of soul. For which reason, when he was framing the universe, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best. Wherefore, using the language of probability, we say that the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God.<sup>10</sup>

It will be noted that Plato's Timaeus does not offer this speculation in logical terms. It is presented as a mythical account of the origin of this world. The reader is not provoked to challenge it at the logical or empirical plane. Perhaps such doctrines have a purely mystical or poetic value. Leibniz's mistake lay in treating a myth as though it were an axiomatic truth.

In fairness to Leibniz, however, it should be pointed out that not all of his philosophical writings suffer from this defect. For example, in his *Monadology* his fiction does not sound unconvincing :—

Each portion of matter may be conceived as a garden full of plants, and as a pond full of fish. But every branch of each plant, every member of each animal, and every drop of their liquid parts is itself likewise a similar garden or pond.<sup>11</sup>

The reader does not feel inclined to ask whether there is any logical or empirical justification for Leibniz's theory of monads. The same goes for some of the eloquent passages about his doctrines of plenitude, continuity and pre-established harmony. He often tried to rehabilitate some of the metaphysical doctrines discarded in his own age by using metaphors. For example, he let innate ideas in by the



back-door thus : "the figure traced by the veins of the marble is in the marble, before they are uncovered by the workman."<sup>12</sup> Similarly he resurrected the doctrine of the immortal soul for the comfort of the pious.<sup>13</sup>

Leibniz placed only one qualification on the perfection of the universe, namely that its perfection was strictly in accordance with its place in the wider scheme of God. Leibniz was so much of a rationalist as to say that even the will of God was not independent of rules :—

there is no reason to suppose that God, for the sake of some lessening of moral evil, would reverse the whole order of nature.<sup>14</sup>

God himself, according to Leibniz, cannot do anything without reason. Leibniz had an abhorrence for a view that makes out God as arbitrary or despotic :—

Our end is to banish from men the false ideas that represent God to them as an absolute prince employing a despotic power, unfitted to be loved and unworthy of being loved.<sup>15</sup>

Leibniz begins with the assumption that there is no incompatibility between faith and reason.<sup>16</sup> In his view "no article of faith must imply contradiction or contravene proofs as exact as those of mathematics."<sup>17</sup> As a philosopher of the Enlightenment he was no friend to mystery-mongering :—

one must take care never to abandon the necessary and eternal truths for the sake of upholding Mysteries, lest the enemies of religion seize upon such an occasion for decrying both religion and Mysteries.<sup>18</sup>

Even though he was willing to concede that certain truths like that of the Trinity may be above reason he held firmly to the view that "truth can never be contrary to reason."<sup>18</sup>

Leibniz in his *Theodicy* set out to answer the question which he himself formulated in the following manner :—

There remains, then, this question of natural theology, how a sole Principle, all-good, all-wise and all-powerful, has been able to admit evil, and especially to permit sin, and how it could resolve to make the wicked often happy and the good unhappy ?<sup>19</sup>



In order to deal with the problem in a thorough and systematic manner Leibniz considers evil under three heads, viz., metaphysical, moral and physical. In his view metaphysical evil is privative in nature. Like St. Augustine Leibniz rejects the Manichean explanation of evil. Good and evil do not have two independent origins. Again like St. Augustine he does not ascribe the origin of evil to matter because matter, like spirit, has been created by God. The origin of evil is in man's "original imperfection" :—

there is an *original imperfection in the creature* before sin, because the creature is limited in its essence; whence it ensues that it cannot know all...properly speaking, the formal character of evil has no *efficient* cause, for it consists in privation.<sup>20</sup>

I shall not devote much time to the discussion of metaphysical evil because it is not in fact felt by us except during our adolescence. No one spends sleepless nights brooding over why rocks are not crowned with leaves and flowers or why ants are not peacocks.<sup>21</sup> Pope's refutation of such doubts therefore has a merely rhetorical value :—

Why has not man a microscopic eye ?  
For this plain reason, man is not a fly.<sup>22</sup>

It is his explanation of moral and physical evil that we must consider at some length. In the first place God is not the cause of moral evil. He only permits it. But he is the cause of physical evil which is a punishment of moral evil.<sup>23</sup>

Now the weakness of Leibniz's work is that he accounts for moral and physical evil in metaphysical terms. Leibniz chiefly resorts to the doctrine of the Great Chain of Being here as in explaining metaphysical evil. Man has a certain place in God's plan. He is a link in the chain. There are beings higher and lower than man. It was necessary to have some creature at precisely this point, enjoying precisely these powers and subject to precisely these limitations. The powers and limitations are inter-dependent. It is not possible to have the one without the other. For example, man's susceptibility to pain is involved in his structure. If fire could not burn him it would not be able to warm him either.

In the opinion of Leibniz our world is the best of all *possible* worlds, i.e., it is not the best in an unqualified or absolute sense. The reason why we do not find it so is that we do not fully understand



God's reasons. Furthermore the felicity of all God's creatures was not God's whole aim in creating the world.<sup>24</sup> There are times when it is difficult to understand why man is being subjected to pain. We find it incomprehensible because we are not acquainted with all the forms of creation. It may be that man has to suffer for the sake of some higher forms of being. Just as a bull or a sheep does not understand what 'uses man is putting it to, so also man does not understand what use he is being put to by powers higher than man. Pope put the matter very wittily in his *Essay on Man* :—

When the proud steed shall know why man restrains  
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains;  
When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,  
Is now a victim, and now Egypt's god :  
Then shall man's pride and dulness comprehend  
His actions', passions', being's use and end;  
Why doing, suff'ring, check'd, impell'd; and why  
This hour a slave, the next a deity.<sup>25</sup>

This sort of explanation of man's evil is not likely to carry conviction with any one. This doctrine merits the kind of rebuke that Dr. Johnson administers to another thinker who set up as a defender of God's ways, viz., Soame Jenyns :—

I do not mean to reproach this author for not knowing what is equally hidden from learning and from ignorance. The shame is to impose words for ideas upon ourselves or others. To imagine that we are going forward when we are only turning round. To think that there is any difference between him that gives no reason, and him that gives a reason, which by his own confession cannot be conceived.<sup>26</sup>

The argument that some higher forms of being might be making sport of man as man makes sport of foxes and hares was developed thus by Dr. Johnson :—

As we drown whelps and kittens, they amuse themselves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim or the walls of Prague, as we encircle a cock-pit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. Some of them, perhaps, are virtuosi, and delight in the operations of an asthma, as a human philosopher in the effects of the air-pump. To swell a man with a tympany is as good sport as to blow a frog. Many a merry bout have these frolick beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again and all this he knows not why. As they are wiser and more powerful than we, they have more exquisite diversions, for we have no



way of procuring any sport so brisk and so lasting, as the paroxysms of the gout and stone, which undoubtedly must make high mirth, especially if the play be a little diversified with the blindness and puzzles of the blind and deaf.<sup>27</sup>

Leibniz explains the inequality among the various orders of being as among the various orders of human society with a parallel from music. The rules of harmony and proportion require that some notes should be high and others low. If all notes had the same pitch there would be no music possible. Similarly cosmic music requires that different orders of beings should have different capacities. With reference to human society this argument becomes a defence of stratification, at least of the status quo.<sup>28</sup>

The weakness of this argument by analogy is obvious. As Dr. Johnson said in his review of Soame Jenyns's *Free Enquiry* :—

Perfection or imperfection of unconscious beings has no meaning as referred to themselves; the *bass* and the *treble* are equally perfect; the mean and the magnificent apartments feel no pleasure or pain from the comparison. Pope might ask the *weed*, why it was less than the *oak*, but the *weed* would never ask the question for itself...Evil must be felt before it is evil.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly men placed in a humble station in life can derive no comfort from the fact that their poverty provides an aesthetic contrast to the riches of others. Leibniz quotes with approval the Greek Stoic philosopher Chrysippus who offered the consolation that "there are sometimes portions in a comedy which are of no worth in themselves and which nevertheless lend grace to the whole poem."<sup>30</sup> Such thoughts offer no comfort to those whose role is considered worthless in society.

Leibniz borrowed some of his arguments from traditional Christian sources, for example, moral evil is a consequence of man's free will. Having made man free to choose, God should not have prevented him from choosing wrongly. Further once man chose moral evil, physical evil or suffering followed inevitably. God himself cannot prevent the operation of the law of cause and effect. Leibniz asserted the Christian doctrine of free will in defiance of the schools of Hobbes and Spinoza.

As a philosopher of the Enlightenment Leibniz found the doctrine of predestination unacceptable, particularly in so far as the



number of the damned is supposed to be larger than that of the saved. For example, he considers it strange that :—

even in the great future of eternity, evil should have the advantage over good...since there will be many that are called and few that are chosen or are saved.<sup>31</sup>

Like Milton in *The Christian Doctrine* he was unwilling to accept any predestination to damnation.<sup>32</sup> He questioned many of the harsher implications of St. Augustine's account of the damned.<sup>33</sup> According to St. Augustine, for example, original sin of itself is sufficient to earn the flames of hell. This opinion Leibniz finds unacceptable.<sup>34</sup> Again, St. Augustine had condemned "to eternal flames children that die in the age of innocence before receiving baptism." This doctrine was "approved by the venerable Thomas Aquinas." Leibniz finds that this opinion "has not sufficient foundation either in reason or in scripture" and that "it is outrageously harsh."<sup>35</sup> For his part he says, "I would be rather on the side of those who grant to all men a grace sufficient to draw them away from evil."<sup>36</sup>

Thus it is in his humanity or compassion that we must look for an explanation of his apparent inconsistency. His logic should have led him to a rejection of free will as Spinoza's did. If God himself must act in accordance with certain irrevocable laws man cannot be supposed free of their operation. The laws of nature for example require that the sun should shine on the just and the unjust alike. Leibniz asks, "Shall God not give the rain, because there are low-lying places which will be thereby incommoded?"<sup>37</sup> The laws of nature are not designed to suit the convenience of individuals. What is harmful for a few is necessary for the many.

Leibniz did not attempt an analysis of the human psyche as Pope did. He did not suggest any misleading analogy between natural and moral laws. He cannot therefore be justly accused of fatalism. It will be remembered that Pope made the mistake of suggesting that there was a necessity in the moral world comparable to the natural world :—

If plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven's design,  
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline ?<sup>38</sup>

Being a trained philosopher Leibniz saw that moral "freedom is deemed necessary, in order that men may be deemed guilty and open



to punishment."<sup>39</sup> We cannot in one breath hold that man is predestined to sin and then punish him for his sins.

As pointed out earlier there are many parallels between Leibniz's *Theodicee* and Pope's *Essay on Man*. By now it has been established that Pope did not owe any debt to Leibniz.<sup>40</sup> They owe their resemblance to a common source, viz., Shaftesbury. Leibniz tells us that human nature is not as corrupt or depraved as it is made out to be. He rejected the systematic blackening of human nature which the traditional Christian thinkers had been engaged in :—

there is incomparably more moral good than moral evil in rational creatures.... This evil is not even as great in men as it is declared to be. It is only people of a malicious disposition... who find wickedness everywhere...<sup>41</sup>

It must be admitted that he did not reject the Christian dogma of original sin as Shaftesbury his master had done :—

'Tis impossible to suppose a mere sensible creature originally so ill-constituted and unnatural as that, from the moment he comes to be tried by sensible objects, he should have no one good passion towards his kind, no foundation either of pity, love, kindness or social affection.<sup>42</sup>

In this respect he was even more tame than Pope who omitted any reference to original sin in his account of man's nature without positively rejecting the doctrine.

The theological works of Leibniz show that good intentions and even vast learning are no substitute for courage or consistency. It is true that if he had been more courageous he would have met with the fate of Hobbes, Spinoza and Hume. He would simply have been ignored in his own time. He was found more acceptable by the orthodox and the pious than other philosophers largely because he was more expedient. Fortunately his mathematics and logic were not affected adversely by his wish to be on the right side of orthodoxy. In some respects the intellectual climate in the Age of the Enlightenment can be compared with that of the Communist countries today. The physical sciences were free of interference from the Church and society. But any speculation that was likely to affect men's ideas of right and wrong was subject to Church censorship. Still Church censorship was gradually becoming ineffective. Voltaire



was able to defy it and was persecuted on account of it. Leibniz was not willing to pay that price.

## NOTES

1. *Leibniz : Philosophical Writings*, trans. M. Morris, 1961, p. xxx. Cue title "Morris". Most translators rely on Gerhardt's German edition (1875-90) in 7 vols although it is not complete.
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3. W. James, *Pragmatism*, New York, 1943, p. 23.
4. A.O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Cambridge Mass., 1953.
5. *Theodicy*, trans. E.M. Huggard, 1951, p. 74. All quotations from the *Theodicy*, (1710) have been taken from this translation.
6. Morris, p.8.
7. *ibid.* pp. 216-7.
8. *Theodicy*, p. 128.
9. *Candide*, trans. John Butt, Penguin, 1947, p. 20.
10. *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, Oxford, 1892, III, 450.
11. Morris, p. 15.
12. *ibid.* p. 168.
13. *ibid.* p. 24.
14. *Theodicy*, p. 188.
15. *ibid.* p. 127.
16. *ibid.* p. 77.
17. *ibid.* p. 87.
18. *ibid.* p. 88.
19. *ibid.* p. 98.
20. *ibid.* pp. 135-36.
21. *ibid.* p. 278.
22. *Essay on Man*, I, 193-94.
23. *Theodicy*, p. 220.
24. *ibid.* p. 189.
25. *Essay on Man*, I, 61-68.
26. *The Works of S. Johnson*, ed. A. Murphy, 1823, XI, 298.
27. *ibid.* pp. 299-300.
28. *Theodicy*, p. 278.
29. *The Works of Johnson* XI. 200.
30. *Theodicy*, p. 326.
31. *ibid.* p. 132.
32. *ibid.* 137
33. *The City of God*, Book XXI.
34. *Theodicy*, p. 173
35. *ibid.* p. 174
36. *ibid.* p. 175.
37. *ibid.* p. 206
38. *Essay on Man*, I, 155-56.
39. *Theodicy*, p. 123.
40. See for example Cecil A. Moore, "Did Leibniz Influence Pope's *Essay*?" *JEGP* XVI (1917) pp. 84-102. Also W. H. Barber, *Leibniz in France*, Oxford, 1955, p. 118.
41. *Theodicy*, p. 264
42. *Characteristics*, ed. J.M. Robertson, 1900, I, 259.







## CULTURAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FOR AN AVERAGE INDIAN STUDENT

*by*

SARLA PRASAD

When we refer to culture and to the comparison of cultures in the context of language learning and language teaching we do not take culture to mean refinement, achievement in art and literature, intellectual development and over all elegance. We mean by culture merely the ways of a people belonging to a particular language community. The 'culture' meaning the ways of life of a people can be divided into two broad categories, material and non-material. The non-material aspect of culture consists of the inner realities of life manifesting themselves in our attitudes, faiths and beliefs regarding the vital issues of life relating to religion, love, marriage, etc. This reminds us of the essential unity of human race—all of us have had the same origin, are capable of the same emotions. In a way the whole range of human experience has been the same all over the world—from craving for food to theological inquiries and seeking of God. These are the universals of human nature and a proper guidance will make the students feel and respond the right way while reading a story, a novel, or a play, involving suffering, happiness, pity, love or sacrifice. But even such themes depicting the inner realities of life which are supposed to be universal need careful handling and sometimes elaborate explanations.

People living in different parts of the world have evolved their own ways of life and ways of thinking. They have their own social, aesthetic, religious and emotional values. And young students are conditioned by certain tastes and values and by the economic, religious, and historical background of the society they belong to. This makes it difficult for them to understand, enjoy and appreciate things which are foreign to their culture. Professor I.A. Richards speaking at the British Council Conference held at King's College, Cambridge in July 1962, stressed the point of 'the extreme remote-



ness of the cultural tradition' that the British represent from the traditions of the peoples they would like to help.

He said—

Let me illustrate it with one particular instance that drove the irony rather deeply into my soul. I had been teaching—I thought with some success—Tess of the D'urbervilles to a University class in China. Just about the time I happened to read the ending to them. To my amazement as the flag went up showing that the president of the immortals had finished his sport with Tess an unmistakable wave of approval passed through the class. I didn't let the opportunity slip by but gave them an essay to write then and there. They used the rest of the hour writing down just what they had been thinking of the over all picture. I remember one formulation that summed up the general view. "Tess was an unfilial daughter. She had been rude and disobedient to her father. So it is good that she was punished to death."

Well, where are we with that—with that as an outcome of more than a little hard serious work on the book. Those of us who have taught under such circumstances, would have our parallel anecdotes, complete misunderstanding; the entire point utterly missed.

Here we find that the Chinese students were unable to appreciate the story of Tess and her tragedy due to the vast distance between their culture and that represented by Hardy in the novel.

Similar difficulties have been faced by numerous Indian teachers of English while teaching Indian students. We can take 'The Gift of the Magi' by O'Henry as an example.

The students are likely to miss the entire point unless they get proper guidance.

The story centres round the desire for a Christmas present which both husband and wife want to give to each other and the sacrifice involved in it. Theirs is a poor family. Yet, since the setting is western and there are some articles of furniture in their house, it is difficult for an average Indian student to realise how poor they are, and consequently they miss the sacrifice too, which both Jim and Della make for each other. They sacrificed their dearest possessions and yet could not enjoy the fulfilment of their desire. Jim sold his watch and bought a beautiful set of combs



that Della had admired for a long time in a Broadway shop window only to learn that his wife had sold her beautiful hair to buy a platinum chain for his watch. This grim irony of circumstance instead of rousing feelings of pity and compassion in the heart of the students can make them feel amused if they miss the point. Besides, cutting off one's hair, is supposed to be inauspicious for a married woman in India. So this is another great cultural block which may prevent them from appreciating the sacrifice she made for her husband.

Such instances can be multiplied and they only make us feel that despite the evolution of a common urban culture, vast differences in social attitudes persist. It is, therefore, necessary that the selection of reading material be carefully made keeping the cultural aspect in view in addition to the language aspect. These are the two difficulties which might make the text difficult to the foreign students and make the right kind of understanding and appreciation almost impossible. These difficulties are the result of the distance in time and in geography. Native writers of English write for the educated, contemporary native readers. Hence the older the text the more difficult it will be for the students. So as far as possible modern writings should be prescribed.

Teachers of English should be aware of the fact that besides language and the thought content, cultural content should also be examined and analysed—so that they can help the students in their particular area of cultural difficulty as well.

Once we ascertain the difficulty level of the cultural content of a given text it is easy for us to explain things to our students keeping in mind western culture vis-a-vis Indian culture. It is with this belief that I make the following attempt to analyse and assess the difficulty level of the cultural content of 'Her First Ball' by Katherine Mansfield and 'The Man in Black' by Oliver Goldsmith from 'Gateways to Prose and Poetry' (edited by R. S. Macnicol)-the text prescribed for the First Year class in the University of Rajasthan upto 1966.

#### 'HER FIRST BALL' BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD

In this short story Katherine Mansfield depicts the delight of of a shy young girl and contrasts her joy with the reflections of an



old man. She shows that we are perfectly happy during our fresh, innocent experience of life—at the first impact of happiness upon us. But happiness is a fleeting thing. All this can be understood by our students but the cultural background in which the story is set makes it extremely difficult for an average Indian student to enjoy and appreciate it.

Both the *non-material* and the *material aspects of culture* are so thoroughly western that Indian students at Ist Yr. level find the entire story strange and incomprehensible. The majority of our students belong to rural areas where they do not even get any opportunity of seeing nicely furnished houses, with modern comforts. It is extremely difficult for these students to understand an atmosphere made of swing doors, and gas light, gilt chairs, and cushion chairs, and red carpet etc. Besides the young girls and young boys who are not allowed even to enter into conversation with one another and are never allowed to stay out late in the night cannot understand the thrill and excitement of Leila.

'*Her First Ball*'—The very title of the story is baffling to the students. Even in urban areas very few students at the P.U. level know that there is a dance called 'ball' in the western world. One of the lecturers at Sikar in Rajasthan was altogether disappointed when, as soon as he started telling the story, the boys started asking whether it was Foot-ball, or Volley-ball, or Cricket or Tennis-ball :

#### **Leila's state of mind and her imagination**

She was thrilled by the idea of a partner and a hint of her psychology is given by Katherine Mansfield in these words—"perhaps her first real partner was the cab", and again "...the bolster on which her hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress suit". All this is difficult for an Indian student and unless the lecturer takes extra pains to draw a psychological picture of a young western girl who is going to her first Ball—the students won't understand it.

*Dress and make-up :* There are references to the flowers, the costume jewellery, and the dress with which the Sheridan girls have decked themselves up. e.g. "Meg's tuberoses, Jose's long loop of cumber, Laura's little dark head, pushing above her white fur like a flower through snow...and again she thinks of "the wisps of tissue paper from the new gloves."



Then we came across the description of the dressing table, the mirror and "a great quivering jet of gas" lighting the ladies' room."

We are told that the young beautifully dressed girls who have come to dance are 'busy patting their hair,' trying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs, smoothing marble—white gloves, looking for invisible hairpins, powdering their backs, bothering about the frills, etc.

**Leila's excitement :—Polished gleaming floor—Music band**

The Indian students who have never seen such a polished gleaming floor can hardly understand Leila's excitement when "she clutched her fan, and gazing at the gleaming, golden floor, and azaleas, the lanterns, the stage at one end with its red carpet and gilt chairs and the band in the corner, she thought breathlessly "How heavenly ! How simply heavenly !" In fact, it is too heavenly for our students to appreciate.

Leila thinks about her nights "Up till now it had been dark, silent, beautiful, very often—Oh yes—but mournful somehow solemn. And how it would never be like that again—it had opened dazzling bright".

All this is difficult for our students to imagine.

*Colloquial expressions* : like "Twig ?" "She is under my wing", "He ducked and smiled", "freckled fellow", "send them spinning" are difficult for the students.

**"THE MAN IN BLACK" by Oliver Goldsmith :**

This essay is difficult for our students as it is full of words that are unknown to them. The language itself is a great stumbling block.

Besides the compassion and the sympathy of the man in black towards the poor cannot be understood and appreciated unless the following points are made clear to the students :—

*The poor law in England* :—which makes ample provision for the support of the poor.

*The 'Parish-houses'* :—where the poor are supplied with food, clothes, fire and a bed to lie on.



*Attitude to beggars* :—The Indian attitude is not the same as the English. Many Indians still associate begging with a religious life. Therefore, the sacrifice made by the man in black is much greater and more charitable than it will be in the case of an Indian.

The 'piece of silver' has to be explained.

### **The Naval Tradition of England :**

India never had much of a navy while much of martial bravery in England was shown in the navy. The sailor in India does not have the same public image as he has in England. The man in black examined the sailor "demanding in what engagement he was thus disabled and tendered unfit for service. The sailor replied in a tone as angrily as he had been an officer on board a private ship of war, and that he had lost his leg abroad, in defence of those who did nothing at home. At this reply all my friend's importance vanished in a moment; he had not a single question more to ask; he now only studied what method he should take to relieve him unobserved. He had, however, no easy part to act, as he was obliged to preserve the appearance of ill-nature before me, and yet relieve himself by relieving the sailor".

The compassion and desire to help that filled the heart of the man in black at the sight of the sailor will be better understood by the students if they know the importance and the regard sailors get in England.

### **Conclusion :**

If we try to highlight all these points of comparison resulting from cultural differences we will be able to guide and help our students well. And the students will be able to appreciate a given piece of literature in its right perspective.



## THE PROBLEMS INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE IS FACED WITH

*by*

A.L. MISHRA

Indo-Anglian literature, which is Indian's humble contribution to the common pool of world writing in English, is currently faced with a number of problems. Indians hold it in contempt because of its foreign garment. They look down upon it as the work of India's literary cranks. To them it is a relic of slavery and has nothing of that excellence which is possessed by Indian literatures in regional languages. The English, who suffer from racial complex, have a hitch in recognizing it as an off-shoot of their own literature. Blinded by self-conceit and colour prejudices they fail to perceive any intrinsic worth in it. To them it is a heap of rubbish which does not and cannot stand any comparison with the work of Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Dickens and Thackeray. Indian writing in English is thus sandwiched between Indians' scorn and English-men's indifference. Its double appeal has proved a bane for it. I beg to differ with those who predict a bright future for it in such confident words as these :

There is no doubt that, with its own individual vision and voice, Indo-Anglian literature will grow-like other literatures of contemporary India—from strength to greater strength.<sup>1</sup>

Circumstances, as they exist today, clearly point towards the gloomy prospects which lie in wait for it.

Moreover, the number of students in English classes in Indian Colleges and Universities is precipitously falling every day. The teacher of English is no longer in the vanguard of our nation-builders. English, as a medium of instruction, is fast disappearing from our educational institutions. Political leaders and vested interests are busy generating an atmosphere of extreme hostility against it. This being so, it appears that the days of Indo-Anglian literature in India are numbered now. A sense of insecurity has already seized it, and



if the present state of affairs is allowed to continue, the day is not far off when for want of adequate patronage it will wither even as a plant withers for want of sufficient sunshine and rain. The only ray of hope in this gloomy atmosphere is its foreign reader. Confronted with a predicament at home it can save itself from languishing, in case it succeeds in catching the eye of that foreign reader.

Apart from what has been stated above, reading habits and book-buying habits are practically non-existent in our society. Our poverty does not permit us to spend much on books, though it is a very profitable investment. Indian writers, whether they write in their mother-tongues or in English, have, for this reason, only a limited custom. Indo-Anglian literature, like the Vernacular literatures of India, suffers from the shortage of readers and admirers. Besides, publishers in our country are least interested in bringing out emotional literature. The publication of text-books, examination-guides and help-books meant for students is far more paying to them. To undertake the publishing of novels, short stories, essays, dramas and biographies written by Indo-Anglians is, in the language of Commerce, to block their capital, for which they are not willing at all. Their publications of general interest are most often sex sustained books, for it is these which the Indian reader is greatly fond of.

One more drawback, which hampers the growth of Indian writing in English, is the scarcity of good and impartial reviewers. In this century publicity can increase custom to a very large extent, and the reviewing of books is one of the many devices whereby they can be given wide publicity. Unfortunately book-reviewing in India is irregular and partisan. Books known as Indo-Anglian literature seldom receive the attention of talented and impartial reviewers. The slenderness of the clientele they have may be ascribed to this very factor. And this is not all. Our country has very low standards of book production. Thousands of books appear every year in English and in native languages, but very few of them have attractive appearances. The usual characteristics of a publication by an Indo-Anglian writer are its ugly get-up and numerous mis-prints. Readers with a keen aesthetic sense and refined tastes must, it is natural, feel averse to reading such books.

Next we come to the difficulty of the historian of Indo-Anglian literature. The history of a literature is based partly on internal



evidence and partly on external evidence. But when neither of them is adequately available, the author, who undertakes to write that history, is frequently faced with hurdles and is, at times, in a fix. Such exactly is the condition of the historian of Indo-Anglian literature. He finds to his bewilderment neither internal evidence, nor external evidence. A large part of the Indo-Anglian literature of the early nineteenth century is to be found in those periodicals which are, now, no more, and in those books which have been swallowed up by oblivion. In addition to this, efforts to prepare an authentic and well-connected record of Indian writing in English were hardly ever made. There are, therefore, no books to guide the present-day chronicler. He must depend more on his exploratory skill and his imagination than on foreign aid.

One may question here—and the question will not be impertinent—as to what we should do to promote Indian writing in English. My answer to the above question is that Indo-Anglian literature should form a part of the study of literature in all Indian Colleges and Universities. It should not be treated as a foreign literature; but it should be regarded as one of our national literatures, for it embodies in it the immortal words of our national heroes to whom modern India is highly indebted. We have an Australian literature, an American literature and a Canadian literature; and all of them are being studied as such. Why do we not introduce the study of Indo-Anglian literature into all our Universities? The Universities of Baroda and Andhra have already taken the lead. It is for others to follow the example set by them. And our study of this literature will prove very fruitful too. “This variegated literature in English is English literature with a new flavour, a new sensibility and a new colouring of the imagination. The Indo-Anglian writer is free to draw inspiration from the opulence of national or regional myth or the reserves of his spiritual heritage.... He uses English apparently unidiomatically, but this itself gives his writing a new piquancy”.<sup>2</sup>

Another suggestion, the implementation whereof may prove equally effective, is that Indian publishers should give up their inapathetic attitude towards Indian writing in English. Their patronage is bound to give a fillip to it. The Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan of Bombay has rendered a valuable service to the nation by bringing out some very important writings of Indo-Anglians. These writings have played



a significant role in diffusing the knowledge of Indian philosophy and culture inside the country and outside it. If our publishing concerns, including the National Book Trust of India, follow in the foot-prints of the Vidya Bhavan and extend their willing co-operation to the Indo-Anglian writer, there is no reason why Indian writing in English should not flourish.

#### NOTES

1. K.R.S. Iyengar, "Indian Writing in English", *Contemporary Indian Literature*, Second Edition, p. 58 (1959).
2. K.R.S. Iyengar and Prema Nandkumar, *Introduction to the Study of English Literature* (Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 41.



# HAMLET'S HEROIC IDENTITY AND SUBMISSION TO PROVIDENCE : A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

*by*

ALUR JANAKI RAM

Hamlet's heroic integrity, once taken for granted, has been subjected to severest scrutiny in the seesaw of modern criticism of the play. Like the Romantic idealisation, even the denigration of Shakespeare's hero appears to be a firmly established mode of approach traceable in some well-known Twentieth Century criticisms. A reference to certain representative critical statements on Hamlet's submission to 'Providence' makes an interesting reading, focussing on the critical concern not only with the nature of that submission but even its relation to his integrity and identity. The debate on this subject seems to be as open and unending as ever, judging from the attention given to it in some recent commentaries. It might not be altogether unrewarding to make a reappraisal of some issues of this debate, if only for probing the nature of the heroic image that emerges in the last part of the play. Such a probing, when re-inforced by frames of reference from related fields of other older literatures, may provide us with a balanced perspective on the vexed question of Hamlet's integrity and identity. Hamlet's submission to Providence has generally been approached as an isolated instance and this has resulted, quite too often it seems to me, in inadequate descriptions of it as negative or fatalistic. A comparison of Hamlet's submission, on the other, with similar heroic gestures of Hector, Orestes, Arjuna and Amleth ( Belleforest's hero ) may reveal that the sort of identity Hamlet finally achieves belongs to a certain recognisable or archetypal mythic-heroic pattern.

It is useful to quote at the very outset two of the much discussed passages from the play that have a bearing on the subject :

There is a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will—

( 5.2.10 )



We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now it is not to come—if it be not to come, it will be now,—if it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all : since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is it to leave be times? Let be.<sup>1</sup> ( 5.2.217 )

Bradley's comment on these celebrated passages deserves to be quoted here as the earliest specimen in this century of the strictures on this subject :

..., they seem to express that kind of religious resignation which, however beautiful in one respect, deserves the name of *fatalism* rather than that of faith in Providence, because it is not united to any determination to do what is believed to be the will of Providence. In place of this determination, the Hamlet of the Fifth Act shows a kind of sad or indifferent self-abandonment, as if he secretly despaired of forcing himself to action, and were ready to leave his duty to some other power than his own.<sup>2</sup>

Bradley's equation of Hamlet's resignation with 'fatalism' and 'sad or indifferent self-abandonment...' has to be seen within the framework of his 'Melancholy' theory, a general psychological approach to 'character' he was so much concerned with. These Bradleyan undertones of criticism gradually merge into overtones of denigration as the century advances. The later questioning of the worth of the 'Sweet Prince', which has become an important strain in *Hamlet* criticism, has to be seen against the background of death consciousness that not only was a major concern of the literature between the Wars but also happens to be part of the play-structure. It is in this critical light that one should see Wilson Knight's famous identification of Hamlet with negative death-forces;<sup>3</sup> it is an example of the farthest limit which one sided symbolist-imagist analyses sometimes lead up to. Similar sceptical attitudes toward Hamlet's nobility are also reflected in the commentaries of Tillyard, John Vyvyan and L.C. Knights. While Tillyard is content to observe that the Hamlet of the Fifth Act represents no 'regeneration', Vyvyan is affirmatively insistent that *Hamlet* is 'a death play', 'a study in degeneration from first to last'.<sup>4</sup> And L.C. Knights too, who approaches the play mainly for its 'problem of consciousness, of self-identity'<sup>5</sup> is convinced that Hamlet's consciousness, the focal point of the play, is characterised by a fixation on death, negation and corruption of man and represents no development toward self-knowledge that Lear's dramatic career reveals. Even Hamlet's 'readiness is all' attitude does not mitigate his lapses, according to this critic (p. 90) :



...Hamlet's utterance can in no sense be regarded as indicating the goal towards which his consciousness, the central consciousness of the play, has been directed. What it represents rather is the paradoxical recognition of a truth glimpsed in defeat, and by this I mean defeat in terms of Hamlet's own highest standards. All that Hamlet is now ready for is to meet his death in playing the part of the avenger, the part imposed on him by the Ghost whose command had been for a sterile concentration on death and evil.

In a similar key is a more recent interpretation, Gunnar Boklund's reading of what he considers as Shakespeare's judgment on Hamlet the man :

What is the judgment on Hamlet the man ? Our impressions of Hamlet as he was before his father's death must necessarily be fragmentary and personal; according to Ophelia he was "the expectancy and rose of the fair state," with a mind that was above all 'noble.' To us, however, this "noble Hamlet" will have to remain a possibility, an ideal; to many, an illusion. What we have seen is how a hypersensitive, hyperintelligent, and witty, but sadly inexperienced and morally unsophisticated youngman is shaken to the core of his being by intimate contact *with what he considers unprecedented evil....* His course thus becomes one from one state of despair to another.<sup>6</sup> (italics added)

The contours of this "despair", in Gunnar Boklund's reading, pass from the 'despair of thought' through 'despair of action' (i.e., killing of Polonius) to 'the despair of resignation,' 'the negative balance of mind which the sorely tried may achieve by accepting the horrors of life as inevitable and natural.' It is to this last stage of 'despair of resignation,' Boklund thinks, that Hamlet's submission to Divinity belongs :

One should, as far as I can see, submit to God's will with joy, satisfaction, or at least a positive conviction and there is no sign of this in the case of Hamlet. When he allows things to happen to him, he does it in the belief that everything which takes place will be for the best and that he is no longer capable of performing his mission of revenge. The acceptance of the purposes of a power above him *implies a personal defeat*, which cannot but rankle within. (italics added)

As against this modern misreading of Hamlet's consciousness there is, happily, no lack of sober judgments. Viewing the play as a series of encounters between self and a given role, Peter Ure<sup>7</sup> considers Hamlet's submission to Providence as the culmination of



this interplay, to the extent that it ceases finally to be a commitment to the rôle of a passionate avenger—a role enacted fully and clearly by the 'foil' character Laertes. G. K. Hunter too regards Hamlet as a nobler representative of the heroic ideal :

*Hamlet* represents a convulsive effort to move forward to the *heroism of the individual* without abandoning the older social and religious framework of external action.<sup>8</sup> (italics mine)

Hamlet's heroism, then, transcends the limitations of other versions of it presented in the play, Laertes's passionate ideal of conduct or the Christian-Stoical heroism of Horatio or even the pragmatic and unselfconscious military heroism of Fortinbras. Although Hamlet's 'readiness' is analogous, in Hunter's opinion, to the 'patience of a Christian martyr awaiting the blow', representing thus a movement towards standards of integrity in a world of flux, the final effect nonetheless is one of ambiguity, evident from the combination of the passive and active, the personal and ritual elements in Hamlet's final action. Even J.K. Walton sees in the Hamlet of the final Act a certain commingling of 'blood and judgment,' a certain 'looking before and after'<sup>9</sup>—all proof of the hero's inner development. This comes very close to the response of W.B. Yeats for whom Hamlet was an 'image of heroic self-possession after combating the battle within.'<sup>10</sup> This response, far from being a subjective or romantic idealisation, seems to have wider validity and acceptance.

At this stage of *Hamlet* criticism it is perhaps not too late, I believe, to ask : What is the cause of this unending debate over Hamlet's 'regeneration' or 'degeneration' in the last part of the play ? In a nutshell, the issue appears to be one of absolute vs. relative positions over the revenge-ethic, the pivotal centre of the play as well as the critical debate. For much too long, it appears, critical swords have clashed over the so-called 'muddle of two moralities, one avowed, the other not avowed, but both playing heavily and continuously on the central character.'<sup>11</sup> Some critics like Vyvyan and L. C. Knights seem to have got the play out of focus by making heavy weather of the alleged incompatibility between the play's Christian framework and the revenge-ethic. A valid question to ask in this context is not why the two moralities are *muddled* up in the play but whether the dramatic juxtaposition of the two is not a meaningful presentation of the ambiguities of human experience. As an example of the Elizabethan ambivalent approach to the revenge-



ethic, the Bond of Association of 1584 has been cited by Helen Gardner in her essay 'The Historical Approach' :

The councillors who drafted this document, among them the pious Burghley, and the thousands up and down the country who signed it, pledged themselves "in the presence of the eternal and ever-living God", whom they know to have claimed vengeance as his prerogative, that, in the event of an attack on Elizabeth's person, they would "prosecute to the death" any pretended successor to her throne by whom, or for whom, such an act should be attempted or counted. They swore "to take the uttermost revenge on them .."<sup>12</sup>

'And these', Miss Gardner adds significantly, 'were the law-abiding and God-fearing men'. One might as well state such contradictions are not confined to the Elizabethan Age alone. That revenge persists even today at a public (besides personal) level in the form of wars between nations makes its own comment on the basic human impulse to satisfy honour at various levels.

A quotation from a more direct source of the play would put this apparent contradiction in its proper perspective. It is helpful to remember that Belleforest's 'Hamlet'<sup>13</sup> (as also Shakespeare's Hamlet) appears as a 'multiple' revenger against a 'multiple' criminal, in other words as God's 'executor' and 'minister' against a despicable tyrant-murderer. Belleforest himself, for all his medieval piety, describes Hamlet's revenge as 'just' by citing examples from the Biblical matter :

If vengeance ever seemed to have any shew of justice, it is then, when pietie and affection constraineth us to remember our fathers unjustly murdered, as the things whereby we are dispensed withal, and which seeke the means not to leave treason and murther unpunished : seeing David a holy and just King, and of nature simple, courteous, and debonaire, yet when he dyed he charged his soone Salomon (that succeeded him in his throane) not to suffer certaine men that had done hime injurie to escape unpunished. Not that this holy King (as then ready to dye, and to give account before God of all his actions) was careful or desirous of revenge, but to leave this example unto us, that *where the prince or countrey is interested, the desire of revenge cannot by any meanes (how small soever) beare the title of condemnation, but is rather commendable and worthy of praise* : for otherwise the good kings of Juda, nor others had not pursued them to death that had offended their predecessors, if God himself had not inspired and ingraven that desire within their hearts. (italics added)



Apart from this external source-testimony to Hamlet as a figure of *commendation* rather than *condemnation*, there is enough evidence in the play itself to support such a portrayal. The impressive range of details—Claudius's reference to Hamlet's freedom from 'contriving' (4.7.135), Hamlet's public disclaimer of any 'purposed evil' to Laertes in his apology (5.2. 252), and his later honourable behaviour as different from Laertes's treacherous conduct in the duel—all admittedly point toward the way Shakespeare's hero has been meant to be received. However, the passage bearing on Polonius's death seems to be crucial, amenable as it is to both kinds of interpretation, the unfavourable having been the most favoured of Hamlet's detractors :

For this same lord

(*Pointing to Polonius*)

I do repent : but Heaven hath pleased it so,  
To punish me with this, and this with me,  
That I must be their scourge and minister.

(3.4.172)

A recent commentator has interpreted this passage as revealing self-satisfaction or worse callous 'indifference', and casts his dice in favour of the negative reading,<sup>14</sup> conveniently ignoring the contritive sentiment in the line at the head of the passage. Such a reading does scant justice either to the play or the Prince. The most negative interpretation that can possibly be put over this passage is that it smacks of a certain amount of self-righteousness, a certain arrogation of the right to himself to be a Heaven's Justicer. Here, if anywhere, seems to lie some basis for Maynard Mack's contention<sup>15</sup> that Shakespeare's tragic heroes speak at times in the idiom of overstatement. There is more tempting evidence in the play's source itself to warrant such a comment. Hamlet's oration to the Danes, in justification of his killing of his uncle, is a case in point :

To you also it belongeth by dewty and reason commonly to defend and protect Hamlet, *the minister and executor of just vengeance*, who being jealous of your honour and your reputation, hath hazarded himself...It is I that have taken away the infamy of my country, and extinguished the fire that imbraced your fortunes...but it is you that are to recompence those that have well deserved,...it is of you that I demand the price of my vertue and the recompence of my victory.<sup>16</sup>

The questions that compel our attention at this stage are quite basic to a discussion of Hamlet's heroic identity and integrity. Why



has Shakespeare placed in the *middle* of the play an apparently self-righteous kind of self-image while its counterpart occurs in the source after the execution of the revenge-task? Does this self-image as Heaven's minister of Justice continue to loom large in Hamlet's mind till the end? These questions have not received the attention they deserve even from Hamlet's sternest detractors.

An analogy from the Orestes myth might throw some fresh light here. It is evident that Orestes in both the *Electra* plays of Sophocles and Euripides is an avenger with a divine mission. With justifiable reasons, he looks upon himself as an avenger and a purifier of a family curse since he has been committed to such a task by the Phoebus-Apollo oracle. There is some point, then, in his invocation to the gods soliciting their benediction :

Land of my father, Gods of my country,  
Welcome me, grant me success in my coming,  
And you, too, house of my father;  
As your purifier I have come,  
In justice sent by the Gods.<sup>17</sup>

A similar certitude however is lacking for Hamlet as he has only to go by the injunction of an 'ambiguous' ghost. His early role as a self-doubter is part of an honest attempt to test the truth of the ghost's report. Once the truth has been confirmed by the playlet, his later identity as Heaven's 'scourge and minister' might be speak either a righteous pride or 'callous' self-abandonment, especially in a situation where the divine intervention through an oracle or in any other form is not dramatically possible as in a ritualistic Greek tragedy. It should be a matter of some relevance, then, to examine if Hamlet's identity deviates in any significant manner from that of Orestes or Belleforest's Hamblet.

Of all the changes in detail Shakespeare has made in his sources, the most significant addition to the story is perhaps the grave-yard episode. It is important for the sort of posture the hero has acquired in the interaction between his character and his situation. Hamlet's graveyard ruminations over the Death-disfigured skulls show what *psychic distance* he has travelled from the self-conscious righteousness of Belleforest's hero as well as some other heroes of antiquity :

Ham : To what *base uses* we may return, Horatio? Why may not imagination trace the *noble dust* of Alexander, till a find it stopping a bung-hole?



Hor : 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Ham : No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him thither with *modesty enough*, and likelihood to lead it, as thus— Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel ?

(5.1.197-206)

The reference to the 'noble dust' of Alexander and 'imperious Caesar', the ultimate limit of human ambition and achievement, is a significant pointer to the way Hamlet has come to see reality. The perception that a hero should have 'modesty enough' springs from an awareness of the 'mystery of human limitation,' which is further underscored by the 'base uses' to which the great heroes of antiquity were reduced. Such an awareness amounts to, in other words, an acknowledgement of the operation of a vaster power than the human will, which implies not necessarily a 'personal defeat' but a new personal identity. It is this perception of humility or 'modesty' which sets the frame for Hamlet's final spirit of 'readiness is all...'

Hamlet's submission to Providence is better considered, then, in relation to the problem of heroic identity proper, a mythical norm of heroism described in its universal aspects in Joseph Campbell's study, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. If the archetypal hero is to retain his true heroic identity and integrity, it is then necessary for him, Campbell contends, to surrender to the universal will in order that he may not lose 'in the world of flux and action his centring in the principle of eternity'<sup>18</sup> and also that he may not retain a glorified self-conception of being a Heaven's Justicer :

The battle-field is symbolic of the field of life where every creature lives on the death of another. A realisation of the inevitable guilt of life may so sicken the heart that, like Hamlet or like Arjuna, one may refuse to go on with it. On the other hand, like most of the rest of us, one may invent a false, finally unjustified, image of oneself as an exceptional phenomenon in the world, not guilty as others are, but justified in one's inevitable sinning because one represents the good. Such self-righteousness leads to a misunderstanding, not only of oneself but of the nature of both man and the cosmos. The goal of the myth is to dispel the need for such life ignorance by effecting a reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universal will. (p. 238)



The Orestes-situation has already been glanced at. The analogy of a few other mythic-heroic gestures would further confirm and clarify the point. It is significant that Hamlet's surrender to Divinity, on the verge of a ritualistic duel, comes very close to the gestures of Hector and Arjuna (the Eastern mythical hero) besides the Greek Orestes. Placed in slightly different situations, they all face the basic problem of *honour*, even if the problem may be less of a dilemma for Orestes than it is for Hector, Hamlet and Arjuna. The last three figures may be considered as remarkable versions of a heroic dilemma, of a hero caught between inner personal integrity (*honour* as an interior value) and the demands of the social code of war or revenge (*honour* as an exterior polar opposite).<sup>19</sup> The Hector of Shakespeare (*Troilus and Cressida*, 2.2.14-20) and of Homer (*Iliad*, Book XXII) alike is responsive to the inner voice of Reason or the other 'honour' at its best, even though the final choice is in favour of the heroic mode of action. This seems to be the relevance of that famous inward debate of Hector as he waits before the gates for the revenge-hot Achilles:<sup>20</sup>

"...Or what if I lay down my bossy shield and my stout helm, and lean my spear against the wall, and go of myself to meet noble Achilles and promise him that Helen, and with her all possessions that Alexandros brought in hollow ships to Troy, the beginning of strife, we will give to the sons of Atreus to take away, and therewithal to divide in half with the Achaians all else that this city holdeth... But wherefore doth my heart debate thus? I might come unto him and he would not pity or regard me at all, but presently slay me unarmed as if I put off my armour. Better is it to join battle with all speed: let us know upon which of us twain the Olympian shall bestow renown."

A similar concern for honour as integrity, although with a more poignant sense of guilt of involvement, is also felt by Arjuna of the *Gita*<sup>21</sup> on an Eastern battle-ground:

(35) These I would not consent to kill, though killed myself, O Madhusudana (Kṛṣṇa), even for the kingdom of the three worlds; much less for the sake of the earth?

(39) Why should we not have the wisdom to turn away from this sin, O Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa), we who see the wrong in the destruction of the family?

The divine charioteer-guide Krishna, however, solves Arjuna's heroic dilemma by counselling him to fight in a spirit of non-attachment and of submission to a Higher will.



(57) Surrendering in thought all actions to Me, regarding Me as the supreme and resorting to steadfastness in understanding, do thou fix thy thought constantly on Me.

(Ch. 18, p. 162)

(38) Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, then get ready for battle. Thus thou shalt not incur sin.

(Ch. II, p. 108)

And for Hamlet too the problem, at its most basic level, is one of *honour* and action, for the Ghost's multiple command also contains this clause : 'But, howsoever thou pursuest this act, / *Taint not thy mind...*' (1.5.84), which in a sense leads on to the later debate :

Whether it is *nobler* in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against the sea of troubles...  
(3.1.57)

The important consideration is how these mythical figures react to the challenge of their situations in a similar spirit of surrender to a Higher will. The submission of Arjuna or Orestes leans on the positive side, reinforced as it is by a divine counsel or oracle. Hector's posture alone, of all the heroic gestures considered, may be said to deserve the name of fatalism. His awareness of having been doomed to fall, half-way through his encounter with Achilles, has all the qualities of fatalism; it becomes really tragic only when he decides to kick against the pricks with a final defiant gesture :

Then Hector knew the truth in his heart and said : "Ay me, now verily the gods have summoned me to death. I deemed the warrior Deiphobos was by my side but he is within the wall, and it was Athene who played me false. Now therefore is evil death come very near me, not far off, nor is there way of escape. This then was from of old the pleasure of Zeus and of the far-darting son Zeus, who yet before were fain to succour me : but now my fate hath found me. At least let me not die without a struggle or ingloriously..."<sup>22</sup>

'Fatalistic' resignation is thus more appropriate to Hector's frame of mind towards the end than Hamlet's mood of 'readiness'. Hector states in specifically *personal* terms his sense of the doom looming over him while Hamlet's sense of the inevitable is stated only in *general* terms. The Biblical echoes in Hamlet's statement about the 'special providence in the fall of a sparrow' should not lead us to



label this response as passively Christian-Stoic.<sup>23</sup> Equally over simplified is the other interpretation that equates 'readiness' with the 'ripeness' of a fruit about to fall, with the help of an analogy from Thomas Elyot's *Governour* :<sup>24</sup>

'Maturum' in Latin may be interpreted ripe or ready, as fruit when it is ripe, it is at the very point to be gathered and eaten. And every other thing when it is ready, it is at the instant after to be occupied. Therefore that word maturity, is translated to the acts of man, that when they be done with such moderation, that nothing in the doing may be seen superfluous or indigent, we may say, that they be maturely done.

Prof. Kinght's reading clearly overstrains meaning beyond proper limits. The presence of diverse elements, both positive and negative, in Hamlet's response ('the interim is mine...', 'We *defy* augury', 'the fall of a sparrow', 'readiness is all', 'Let be') offers opposition to any one-pointed reading of his submission as joyous-positive or fatalistic-negative. The mythic frame of reference, on the other hand, establishes *it* as analogous to the pattern of normative heroic identity, with a texture enriched by humility and excluding any inflated sense of righteousness. In a sense, this posture becomes a latter-day ruminative heroism which is presented, as Hunter<sup>25</sup> has shown, more as a mode of *being* than of simple activity alone, and which, in addition, exhibits a wider spectrum of awareness—of the 'angelic' reason as also the 'quintessence of dust' in the microcosm of man.

In a more important sense, Hamlet's submission also marks an important stage in his progress through the inner dialectic of Honour—a dialectic that forms an important part (foremost in his soliloquies) of the structure of the play. Insofar as it recognises, as noted earlier, the primacy of a Higher Will over the human, this insight of submission is tantamount to a sober acceptance of the dualities in both 'man and the cosmos'. Such a perception renders Hamlet's self-identity more truly heroic than that of Coriolanus who is likewise involved in the dialectic of honour. But Coriolanus remains till the end committed to an absolutely *personal* sense of honour which deprives him of that larger freedom that Hamlet finally glimpses with a more objective awareness of values. The surrender to the "Other" outside himself explains why Hamlet's self-image comes nearer to the normative heroic ideal than Coriolanus' identity.

The complexity that characterises Hamlet's frame of mind just before the duel accounts for his subsequent puzzling behaviour in



the duel-situation. It has been remarked often enough how he figures more as a 'patient' than an 'agent' in the last movement, and that the offensive that ought to be his is initiated by his adversary. This seems to be a significant reversal of a familiar revenge-pattern in which Belleforest's Amleth, Orestes and Hieronimo purposefully *contrive* the revenge-course to the desired end. It has not gone unnoticed either that the dual active-passive, punisher-punished roles synchronise finally in Hamlet's execution of the hero-deed. The rhythm of the duel does culminate on a note of decisive action accompanied by a passionate gesture :

Here, thou incestuous, murderous Dane,  
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here ?  
(5.2.323)

This ritualistic execution is proof enough that Hamlet's behaviour is kept till the end within the range of the human-heroic norm, and even the imagery of the final choral speeches leads us to think of him as a 'royal' soldier rather than a Saint-Prince. Horatio's summing up deepens our awareness of the vast design behind the recoil of devices on 'the inventor's heads' and the other 'plots and errors'. In Fortinbras's speech, however, the shift of attention is toward the protagonist himself; the weapons imagery<sup>26</sup> that clangs through the play as a strain culminates here in 'rites of war', soldier's music' and the ceremonial lifting of the body on to a stage, thereby linking Hamlet's end with the heroic death of a 'royal' 'soldier'. The concluding lines, with the symbolic suggestion of a battle-field, re-inforce this image of a soldier who has *honourably* acquitted himself in the greater battle of life :

Such a sight as this  
Becomes the *field*, but here shows much amiss.  
Go bid the soldiers shoot.

This comes a trifle close to a heroic vision, with a tragic emphasis, at the heart of the vision, on the paradoxes of the human situation and achievement.



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3. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, (London, 1956 ed.), p. 45.
4. John Vyvyan, *The Shakespearian Ethic*, (London, 1959), p. 55.
5. *An Approach to 'Hamlet'* (London, 1969) p. 44; the long quotation that follows is from the same source and the page number has been indicated in the text.
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7. 'Character and Role from *Richard III* to *Hamlet*', *Stratford-upon-Avon-Studies 5, Hamlet*, (London, 1963); 'Submission to Providence seems to take precedence over dedication to Revenge...', p. 27.
8. G.K. Hunter, 'The Heroism of *Hamlet*', *op. cit.* (*Supra. n.7*), p. 108.
9. The Structure of '*Hamlet*', *op. cit.*, (*Supra. n.7*), p. 88.
10. W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1956), p. 47.
11. Patrick Crutwell, 'The Morality of *Hamlet*—'Sweet Prince' or 'Arrant Knave'?', *Stratford-upon-Avon-Studies 5*, p. 121.
12. *The Business of Criticism*, (Oxford, 1959), p. 61.
13. The reference here is to the Seventeenth Century English translation 'The Hystorie of Hamblet' as reprinted in the New Variorum *Hamlet* edition, Vol. II (Dover Publications, New York, 1963). I have borrowed the epithet 'multiple' from Alfred Harbage, *As They Liked It* (Harper ed., New York, 1961), p. 94. The subsequent quotation from Belleforest is on p. 108 of the edition mentioned here.
14. Gunnar Boklund, *op. cit.*, p. 131. It is interesting to compare this viewpoint with that of Fredson Bowers, 'Hamlet as Minister, and Scourge', *PMLA*, LXX, 4 (September, 1955), 740-49. Bowers makes what looks like a too technical and schematic identification of 'scourge' with 'private-revenger' and 'minister' with 'public-revenger' or God's minister of Justice. However, 'minister' and 'scourge' have been treated here as words carrying no specialised theological connotations, in much the same way as 'minister' and 'executor' seem to have been used in the cited passage from the Seventeenth Century translation of Belleforest.
15. Maynard Mack, 'The Jacobean Shakespeare', *Jacobean Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon-Studies I*, (London, 1960), p. 13.
16. 'The Hystorie of Hamblet', *op. cit.*, pp. 112-13.
17. The verse quotation here is from the *Electra* of Sophocles, tr. David Grene, *The Complete Tragedies*, Vol. II, (The University of Chicago Press Chicago, 1960), p. 335.

For an excellent comparative structural analysis of the two myths of Orestes and Hamlet, see Jan Kott's essay 'Hamlet and Orestes' (tr. Boleslaw Taborski), *PMLA*, LXXXII, 5, (October, 1967), p. 303-13. The point of comparison between Hamlet's and Orestes' submission, however, has not been made in Jan Kott's essay.



18. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (Meridian ed., New York, 1950), p. 239. The burden of the argument in the latter half of my paper owes much to the cited passage (p. 238) from this admirable study of the world's mythological heroic images.
19. In relation to 'honour' in both its relative and absolute senses, the dilemmas of Hamlet and Arjuna have been considered at a greater length elsewhere; see my article 'Arjuna and Hamlet: Two Moral Dilemmas', *Philosophy East and West* (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu), Jan. & April 1968, XVIII, 1 & 2, 11-28.
20. *The Iliad of Homer*, Bk. XXII, tr. E. Myers, *The Complete Works of Homer* (The Modern Library ed., New York), p. 404.
21. See Radhakrishnan's translation as reprinted in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, (New Jersey, 1957), p. 104. The citations that immediately follow are from the same source.
22. *The Iliad of Homer*, *op. cit.*, p. 409
23. This is the view put forth in Irving Ribner's *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1960), pp. 68-82. For Ribner, Hamlet is moving towards the ideal of Christian-Stoic-Philosopher hero embodied in Horatio.
24. Cited by L.C. Knights, *An Approach to 'Hamlet'*, pp. 88-9
25. 'The Heroism of Hamlet', *op. cit.*, p. 105.
26. The strain of weapons imagery in the play has been perceptively traced by Roger L. Cox in his 'Hamlet's Hamartia: Aristotle or St. Paul?', *Yale Review*, LV, 3, (March, 1966), 347-64.

"The play disposes of an entire arsenal—daggers and rapiers, foils and targets, axes and partisans, slings and arrows, brazen cannon and murthering pieces', petards and mines..." p. 358. According to Roger Cox, the sense of pervasiveness of sin expressed in the play is Christian and Pauline, and this sense is implicit in the Greek word—*Hamartia*. It seems to me that Peter Alexander's reading of the play (*Hamlet: Father and Son*, Oxford, 1955) in terms of *arete* is more tenable and convincing than Cox's Christian approach to *Hamartia*. Instead of explaining away Hamlet's madness, as Cox does, as an aspect of *Hamartia*, it might be far more rewarding to regard it as analogous to the 'madness-craftiness' of Belleforest's hero as also the craftiness enjoined on Orestes by the Apollo-Oracle.



## COLLOCATION

by

A. L. SHAH

### Definition

The meaning of the term should, if one believes in the validity of the concept of collocation, be derivable from a list of other words with which it has a high probability of co-occurrence. Then, presumably, one derives the meanings of these other words from a repetition of the process. And so on, *ad infinitum*. But before starting out on the everwidening spiral of co-occurrence, which must, given eternity or enough computers, draw into its vortex all of 'lexis' many thousands of times over, the unconvinced and the uninitiated would, perhaps, prefer a more conventional approach to the meaning of collocation. Here, then, are some quotations from the major proponents of the 'concept' :

*J. R. Firth* : "Collocations are actual words in habitual company..."; "First collect collocations and then arrive at 'meaning'..." ('A Synopsis of Linguistic Theory', 1930-1955).

*T. F. Mitchell* "Some linguists have, I think mistakenly, considered a collocation as of words..."; "...I incline to the view that for a collocation to be established as such the association of its component parts must be habitual..." ('On the Nature of Linguistics and its place in University Studies', 1965).

*Halliday, McIntosh, Strevens* : "...Lexical sets are bounded only by probabilities. Given the item 'chair' we are more likely to find in the same utterance the items 'sit' or 'comfortable' or 'high' than, say, 'haddock' or 'reap'... This tendency to co-occurrence is the basic formal pattern into which lexical items enter. It is known as COLLOCATION, and an item is said to collocate with another item or items." "The lexical item must be identified within lexis, on the basis of collocation." (*The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching*, 1964)

*Spencer, Gregory* : "Collocation is set up to account for the tendency of certain items in a language to occur close to each other, a tendency not completely explained by grammar." ('An Approach to the Study of Style', 1964)

From the above quotations it should be possible to arrive at a rough-and-ready definition of the traditional type. For example, COLLOCATION (n.) the habitual or highly probable co-occurrence in various areas of language use of a group of lexical items clustered



round a key or nodal item; Collocate (n.) a lexical item which habitually co-occurs with a nodal item; Collocate (v.).....

Before the above definition is used to study the collocations of a nodal item there are some problems which must be faced and if possible resolved.

### Some Problems

The first, and probably the most thorny, is the problem of identifying a lexical item, which, if we are to follow Professor Mitchell, is not the same as a 'word', even if we knew what a 'word' is. Firth wrote about words collocation without defining a word, but all later writers refer only to 'lexical items'. Halliday *et al* make the distinction between grammar, which deals with closed system choices between items (e.g., this/that) or between categories (e.g. singular/plural), and lexis, which deals with open set choices between items (e.g. chair/settee/bench/stool etc.). The point is that with closed systems one's choice at a structural 'spot' is severely restricted, whereas with open sets one's range of choice is infinitely extendable and is only restricted by probability. This may help to separate lexis from grammar; but not definitely because "... formal patterns in all languages shade gradually from the grammatical to the lexical..." (Halliday, McIntosh, Strevens); but it does not help very much in the identification of lexical items. Take the sentence frame 'The...x...has arrived'. Presumably one has an open set choice at X and one is in lexis, but not only can we substitute a limitless number of nominals (nouns), such as 'boy', 'box', 'circus', 'inspiration', but also nominal groups, 'fat woman', 'dear old George', 'cow with three legs', 'bright idea which I've been waiting for all my life', and there is in fact no limit to the length and complexity of what is inserted. No one, I hope, intends that all the above inserted structures are to be denoted lexical items; or do they? Halliday stated that lexical items collocate with different groups of items. This seems fine until one tries to make use of it in a collocational study. Before one can start a collocational study of a word or group or clause or sentence to try to find out whether it has a distinctive collocational range and is therefore a lexical item, one has to make a decision about every other word/group/clause/sentence with which it happens to collocate—are they lexical items or not?

If we cannot start a collocational study until we know what a lexical item is, and cannot discover what a lexical item is without doing a collocational study, how can a computer be of any assistance? Besides, there will be no sure way for the computer to distinguish between grammar and lexis. On this point it seems that Professor Mitchell, perhaps following more closely in Firth's footsteps, differs from most other British linguists who subscribe to collocation. If I have understood him correctly, he would hold that 'a beauty' collocates differently from 'the beauty', and, therefore, although 'a' and 'the' belong to a closed system they have lexical significance. Perhaps he would go even further and agree that there can be no useful distinc-



tion between grammar and lexis and that the latter cannot be isolated and studied *per se*.

The problem of identifying a lexical item has proved insuperable so one will have to go on using one's intuition until, perhaps, the computer comes up with a better criterion or, more likely, a complicated set of criteria.

Having decided to use one's intuition on this point another problem immediately arises to bar the way: Within what unit or units is collocation significant? The only guidance given by the authorities on this (often mentioned but seldom used) technique is the mention by Halliday of "the same utterance". This may mean that in spoken texts what is relevant is the whole of what one person says without interruption or break; but even in speech there is the problem of question and answer, which cannot be, in any normal sense of the word, one utterance, but which are mutually relevant. And what is a written utterance? A novel, a poem, a newspaper article, or a chapter, a verse, a paragraph? Ideally, I suppose, one should take the whole of the largest identifiable unit within which one's nodal item (begging another question) occurs. But, again, for the computer an arbitrary limitation has to be made; for instance, taking five lexical items on either side of the nodal item, or the clause in which it occurs, or the orthographic sentence in which it occurs. I would prefer some limitation based on grammar but, since collocation is purported to be independent of grammar, the recommended method is the most arbitrary of all—that of counting a certain number of lexical items in each direction. Then there is the problem of the importance or otherwise of proximity. Perhaps all would agree that proximity is important; otherwise why count lexical items from 1 to 5 removes from the nodal item, why not be completely arbitrary and count the lexical items which occur at, for instance, 20, 41, 583 and 8935 removes? Then, if this can be agreed, how does one, or the computer, measure the relative collocational importance of lexical items at, say, 2 and 200 removes from the node?

A problem which must be solved somehow before a collocational study is begun is that of choosing the nodal item. Of course, if one is interested in only one 'word' there is no problem; similarly, if one has a computer and is able to study all the 'lexical items' collocationally, there is no problem. But the problem arises when one is faced with a text or set of texts and given the task of making an 'objective' and 'formal' statement about the study—the key being collocation. The only way one can choose nodal items is to decide which lexical items appear, impressionistically, to be significant. Perhaps this is not such a bad thing after all if the collocational study which ensues is an objective and formal check on one's impressions. Unfortunately it cannot be because during the study one has to continually make decisions which are either arbitrary or based on intuitions; whichever the case there is plenty of room for one's preconceptions to creep in unobserved.



### Aims of Collocational Studies

Though there are all sorts of problems to be resolved before one can make a collocational study, let us know what there is to be learned from such a study. I will just quote a few authorities on the subject.

Firth's views are probably the most lucid and acceptable—by exhaustive study of the collocations of 'words' from a carefully circumscribed restricted language, these 'words' will group themselves into a manageable number of sets, which will suggest arbitrary definitions. Halliday develops this view somewhat and writes : "A lexical description combining the best features of the thesaurus and dictionary would be an invaluable aid to the language student, whether he was studying his native language, a foreign language, or linguistics." Firth also suggests that such a study would be of value in the study of style, and Spencer and Gregory have developed this idea : "Collocation is an important concept to have in mind when studying the language of literature. This is because the creative writer often achieves some of his effects through the interaction between usual and unusual collocations, and through the creation of new, and therefore stylistically significant, collocation."



## POPE ON SATIRE

By

R. K. MADAAN

In Latin, according to the grammarians, the phrase *satura lanx*, full dish, was applied to literary work. The phrase is said to have been used for a dish containing various kinds of fruit or for food composed of various ingredients. Later on the phrase was shortened to the first term *satura* (whence satire), thus signifying mixture, medley, hotch-potch etc. Thus in its early usage it was used for a discursive composition in verse treating of a variety of subjects.<sup>1</sup> In the course of time it came to be used for the type of poetry which Lucilius, Horace, Persius and Juvenal wrote. It came to be treated as a poetic form. As Trapp noted, "their satires were principally levelled against the Weakness, the Follies, or Vices of Mankind," yet "many Directions, as well as Incidents of Virtue were also found in them." Trapp finds such "Strokes of Morality" particularly abundant in Horace.<sup>2</sup>

English satire is not of native growth. It grew out of the rediscovery of Latin satire by the Elizabethans.<sup>3</sup> But they were mistaken in thinking that *satire* was derived from Greek *satyrus*. Its false derivation was responsible for their harsh tone, uncouth style and loose structure. As Dacier and Dryden noted, it could be seen in the spelling *satyr*.<sup>4</sup> The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were aware of the mistake of their ancestors, but its association with abuse and invective continued. Pope was aware of this aspect of satire when he wrote "The *Good Natured* indeed are apt to be alarmed at any thing like *Satire*."<sup>5</sup> Swift ironically compared contemporary satirists to *Razors* who had "*lost their Edge*." Their satire could not be effective as it did not 'cut'.<sup>6</sup> Pope approved of satire as it :

...heals with Morals what it hurts with Wit.<sup>7</sup>

It is a sort of operation where pain is to be endured for the sake of moral health.

John Peter points out that a satirist like Donne (or Juvenal) opined that the function of his satire—and satire in general—was not



to reform. His aim was to express his attitude towards certain vices in such a way that the readers should share his attitude.<sup>8</sup> Pope considered satire a "sacred Weapon." He touched it with "reverence." It was to be used for the purpose of reform.<sup>9</sup> He could not think of satire in any other terms.

The case of *libel* or *lampoon* was a different one. Johnson defined lampoon as "a personal satire, abuse, censure written not to reform but to vex." When Pope reprinted his first "Imitation of Horace" in 1735 he added an "Advertisement" in which he distinguished between a libeller and a satirist :

And indeed there is not in the world a greater Error, than that which Fools are so apt to fall into, and knaves with good reason to incourage, the mistaking a *Satyr*ist for a Libeller, whereas to a *true Satyr*ist nothing is so odious as a *Libeller*, for the same reason as to a man *truly Virtuous* nothing is so hateful as a *Hypocrite*.<sup>10</sup>

The satirist must be altruistic in his motives. A libel or a lampoon cannot be approved of because it does not intend to reform. Satire should not be written to vex others or just to express one's point of view. It must have a positive purpose behind it. Pope wrote to Swift on April 20 (?), 1733 :

I have not the courage however to be such a *Satyr*ist as you, but I would be as much, or more, a Philosopher. You call your satires, Libels, I would rather call my satires, Epistles. They will consist more of morality than wit, and grow graver, which you will call duller. I shall leave it to my Antagonists to be witty (if they can) and content myself to be useful, and in the right.<sup>11</sup>

No doubt, Pope here minimized the element of attack in his poems. Whether a particular satirist is "in the right" or not, may be a controvesial question if considered on principles. What he considers to be right may be considered wrong by other well meaning persons. All that is expected from him is that he should be pure in his motives and should write with conviction and try to be "useful" to society.

Pope appreciated and imitated Horatian satire, which Dennis termed "Comick"<sup>12</sup>. Pope imitated Horace because the tone and style, *inter alia*, suited him. But he distrusted those who thought that Horace ;



...was delicate, was nice,  
Bubo observes, he lash'd no sort of Vice<sup>13</sup>.

Pope could see in Horace a moral purpose.<sup>14</sup> Pope felt that there could be no good satire without moral intention.

Alvin Kernan talks of a satirist's two personalities public and private.<sup>15</sup> He refers to Maynard Mack's article "The Muse of Satire"<sup>16</sup> where Mack points out that in creating a public personality Pope was following Aristotle's advice to the rhetorician "to establish with his audience a character which will lend credence to what he has to say".<sup>17</sup> It became necessary for Pope to assume a public personality because his satire was based on fact. Realism requires the poet's personality to be depicted and only a high standard of life helps him in his purpose of reform. Thus the assumption of this *persona* was activated by his sincerity of purpose, which is further confirmed by his *Essay on Man*, and for that matter by his *Epistles* too, where satirizing and moralizing go together. The character of the Man of Ross was to serve as an example to be followed by the readers, especially the wealthy men.

Pope defended particular satire against general satire on reformatory grounds. Pope wrote to Dr. Arbuthnot on 2nd August, 1734 that general satire in times of general vice had no force and was no punishment. To reform society some men had to be pilloried as examples. Writing against "The collective Body of the Banditti, or against Lawyers" would be of no avail<sup>18</sup>. In the letter which he published in 1737 under the date of 26th July, 1733, he wrote :

To reform and not to chastise, I am afraid is impossible, and that the best Precepts, as well as the best Laws, would prove of small use, if there were no Examples to enforce them. To attack Vices in the abstract, without touching Persons, may be safe indeed, but it is fighting with Shadows. General propositions are obscure, misty, and uncertain, compar'd with plain, full, and homely examples : Precepts only apply to our Reason which in most men is but weak: Examples are pictures, and strike the Senses, may raise the Passions, and call in those (the strongest and most general of all motives) to the aid of reformation. Every vicious man makes the case his own, and that is the only way by which such men can be affected, much less deterr'd. . . . And my greatest comfort, and encouragement to proceed, has been to see, that those who have no shame, and no fear, of anything else, have appear'd touch'd by my Satires.<sup>19</sup>



Thus particular satire acts in two ways. First, for the public, as a warning to abstain from vices. The idea is made clear and it touches the heart of the readers through examples. Secondly, as punishment to the wicked men. Pope felt that those who were affected by nothing else were touched by his satire.

Moreover, it is necessary to give names of real persons to avoid misconstruction. Fictitious names could be applied to many persons and the innocent might become victims<sup>20</sup>.

The question of general and particular satire is also related to the satirist's views on man or human nature. Swift could write general satire condemning all mankind as he hated and detested "that animal called man". He could not think of man as *animal rationale*. He felt that man should be defined as *rationis capax*. "Upon this great foundation of Misanthropy (though not Timons manner) The (sic) whole building of my Travels<sup>21</sup> is erected", he wrote to Pope on September 29, 1725<sup>22</sup>. Swift hated the world but loved John, Peter and certain other individuals. He expected Pope to be of his view<sup>22</sup>. Pope discreetly replied :

I really enter as fully as you can desire, into your Principle, of love of Individuals; And I think the way to have a Publick Spirit, is first to have a Private one: For who the devil can believe any man can care for a hundred thousand people, who never cared for one ?<sup>23</sup>

Thus Pope's views were contrary to Swift's. Pope considered the love of individuals as a step towards the love of mankind :—That is how one could reach the stage of feeling and realizing :

That true SELF—LOVE and SOCIAL are the same.<sup>24</sup>

This realization was to come through reasoning. For him man was a rational animal.<sup>25</sup> Pope would have agreed with Lord Bolingbroke who disapproved of *Gulliver's Travels*. "blaming it is a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature"<sup>26</sup>. Pope considered the *Travels*, to be the work of an "Avenging Angel of wrath"<sup>27</sup> not of a reformer.

Man is placed on an "isthmus of middle state", "Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd".<sup>28</sup> He is placed between the angel and the beast. He is free to choose between his body and mind. But it is his moral duty to resist the temptations of the body and to care for his soul and his fellow-beings. He should try to know himself and to maintain that order in society which is found in the greater



order of the chain of beings. For this an individual should work according to certain norms. The faulty individuals were to be pilloried as examples by the satirist. Pope could not think of satirizing *man* since his aim was to :

...vindicate the ways of God to Men.<sup>29</sup>

Nor could this method serve his aim of reform through satire. Satirizing certain groups and professions would create popular hatred for them in the public. This could be done only in despair or just to vex and not to reform, which was Swift's declared purpose of his labours.<sup>30</sup> Pope's experience appears to have forced him to change his attitude. The fourth book of the *Dunciad* may be cited as a product of despair.<sup>31</sup>

Pope's views on satire were affected by certain artistic problems related to his own practice. General satire can be effectively written in the narrative form through fictitious situations and characters. A group or profession is not satirized but certain common infirmities, vices or oddities are satirized. This aim may be achieved through mock-travel, fable, allegory, novel or story. It may be possible in a narrative poem. It was not possible in the kind of poetry Pope wrote. Admittedly the *Rape of the Lock* is an exception to this but it was born out of special circumstances. In it the individuals are raised to types. *Beau-monde* is the target of satire and not characters of the poem. In the *Imitations of Horace* and *Epistles* the emphasis is on ideas. Particular persons are brought in as examples to illustrate the ideas. In the *Dunciad* of 1729 a particular person stands for certain vices or follies or absurdities. Eliza, for example, represents obscene authors. The subject of the poem required real persons. Dullness in contemporary literature could not be shown without real personalities. Moreover, Pope's predilection for fact increased with the advance in years. It naturally led towards particular satire. He still used fictitious names but fictitious names were often used in such a way that little doubt was left about the individual intended. Sometimes footnotes came to help.<sup>32</sup>

Some may doubt the efficacy of satire in general and of particular satire in particular.<sup>33</sup> Pope was fully convinced of the effectiveness of his satire. As late as 1732 he wrote to Swift :

I know nothing that moves strongly but Satire, and those who are ashamed of nothing else, are so of being ridiculous.<sup>34</sup>



Later on he wrote :

Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see  
Men not afraid of God, afraid of me :  
Safe from the Bar, the pulpit, and the Throne,  
Yet touch'd and sham'd by Ridicule alone.<sup>35</sup>

The conclusion that Pope arrived at by experience Swift appears to have arrived at through conjecture. He wrote in the *Examiner* No. 38 :

I AM apt to think, it was to supply such Defects ( of Laws ) as these, that Satyr was first introduced into the world; whereby those whom neither Religion, nor natural Virtue, nor fear of Punishment, were able to keep within the Bounds of their Duty, might be withheld by the Shame of having their crimes exposed to open View in the strongest Colours and the themselves rendered odious to Mankind.<sup>36</sup>

Pope's opinion about the efficacy of his satire underwent a change after he wrote the "Second Dialogue". On October 27, 1740 Pope complained that satire had become ineffective as shame, the last step that virtue could stand upon, had deserted the people.<sup>37</sup> He wrote on 13th January, 1743 :

I have lost all Ardor and Appetite even to Satyr, for no body has shame enough left to be afraid of Reproach, or punish'd by it<sup>38</sup>.

The note to the last line of the "Second Dialogue", probably written in 1743, expresses his intention not to publish any more of the kind. "Could he have hoped to have amended any, he had continued those attacks, but bad men were grown so shameless and so powerful, that Ridicule was (sic) become as unsafe as it was ineffectual"<sup>39</sup>.

Thus, apart from the fear of satire becoming ineffectual the satirist's safety was also in danger. Pope referred to the threatened censorship of the press in the "second Dialogue."<sup>40</sup> Pope saw that publishing any more satire would lead him into hot water.<sup>41</sup> So he wrote no satire except, "One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty", which he decided not to publish. Thus when he felt that his satire could not be 'useful' to society, he stopped writing it. Whenever he talked of satire he had particular satire in mind because he felt that general satire could not reform. References to the satirist being unsafe imply particular satire. General satire could not be unsafe. During the last years he wrote the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, which was general satire written in despair.



There was a certain moral code which Pope expected from the satirist. Johnson defined satire as "a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured". The censure is with the purpose of reform and not vexing.<sup>42</sup> Pope enjoins certain obligations upon the satirist as user of the "sacred" weapon of satire. The satirist must use his discrimination in selecting his objects. Pope does not approve of any "worthless" poet who turned virtue or religion to sport.<sup>43</sup> He says in his "Epistle to Arbuthnot" :

Cursed be the Verse, how well so e'er it flow,  
That tends to make one worthy Man my foe,  
Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear,  
Or from the soft-eye'd Virgin steal a tear.<sup>44</sup>

No poem was to be approved of, however high its artistic qualities may be, if it caused the least inconvenience to a virtuous, well meaning or innocent person. The satire is not to be written in a holiday mood, unmindful of a good man's responsibilities towards his society and soul. The target of satire should be one :

...who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,  
Insults fal'n Worth, or Beauty in distress,  
Who loves a Lye, lame slander helps about,  
Who writes a Libel, or who copies out;  
That Fop whose pride affects a Patron's name,  
Yet absent, wounds an Author's honest fame;  
Who can your Merit selfishly approve,  
And show the Sense of it without the Love;  
Who has the Vanity to call you Friend,  
Yet wants the Honour injur'd to defend;  
Who tells whate'r you think, whate'r you say,  
And, if he lye not, must at least betray;  
Who to the *Dean* and silver bell can swear;  
And sees at *Cannons* what was never there:  
Who reads but with a Lust to mis-apply,  
Make Satire a Lampoon, and Fiction, Lye.<sup>45</sup>

They are the enemies of society. They injure the welfare of individuals and society either out of selfish motives or malice, Pope expects society to approve of him and support him who is "arm'd for Virtue" and would :

Brand the bold Front of shameless, guilty Men,  
Dash the proud Gamester in his gilded Car,  
Bare the mean Heart that lurks beneath a Star.<sup>46</sup>

He satirizes vice, whether in the high or the low, the rich or the poor, the successful or the failing, the risen or the rising.<sup>47</sup> He hates no man as a man, but hates vice in any man.<sup>48</sup> He is :



TO VIRTUE ONLY AND HER FRIENDS, A FRIEND.<sup>49</sup>

So much for wickedness. The other major object of satire, according to Johnson, is folly. Pope did not think it proper to attack sheer stupidity. He professed to pardon fools.<sup>50</sup> He had the humour to say that "Folly is many an honest Man's, nay every good-humour'd Man's Lot : Nay it is the Seasoning of Life and Fools (in one Sense) are the Salt of the Earth".<sup>51</sup> So they should not be the object of satire. Then there arises the question what he was attacking in his *Dunciad* over which, along with the other apparatus of the poem, he spent a considerable part of his life and created many enemies. The answer, I think, is that the dunce is one who misuses his sense and abilities. A bad writer is not attacked for his dullness or folly, which is involuntary like personal deformity and as such cannot be the object of satire, Dullness is ridiculed when it sets up for wit "because it is just, to undeceive or vindicate the honest and unpretending part of mankind from imposition."<sup>52</sup> A dunce refuses to do what he is capable of doing and turns to literature, which is beyond his capacity. He should be pardoned for his endeavour to "please us". But the trouble arises when he is obstinate in "persisting to write,"<sup>53</sup> regarding himself, and being treated by the reading public, as a wit.

Dullness in literature involves greater issues. A bad piece of literature is the outcome of the debased ways of thinking of the writer.<sup>54</sup> Its success is a symptom of the low standard of public taste and morality. Grub street was, therefore, a constant threat to society and culture. Along with bad writers it was but natural to attack those who encouraged them—their publishers, patrons, critics, theatre-managers, and the court. Others who misuse their sense or abilities are teachers (at schools and universities) travelling fops and their tutors, antiquaries, virtuosos, Free thinkers, politicians and the like. They are all dunces ( sons of the goddess Dullness ) and their activities are a menace to order and are sure to usher in chaos in morals and politics. Thus it became the moral duty of a satirist to attack dullness.

Pope was also aware of the artistic aspect of satire. He knew that although morality is inseparable from satire, the success of a satire depends mainly on literary or artistic grounds. He wrote to James Tooker on December 18, 1712 that "Tis not the easiest Talent



to make another ridiculous without becoming so oneself". It is necessary for the reader of the satire to laugh with the author.<sup>55</sup> The aim of satire is not only to express the author's indignation but to create that emotion in the reader. In order that the reader should share the views of the writer, he must be persuaded. Thus the art of satire is the art of persuasion. To persuade the reader, the satire must be joined with "Truth."<sup>56</sup>

"Truth" will produce "that sort of Laughter which is Rationall"<sup>57</sup>, as he expected from satire. It is the study of "Truth" and reasoning which make the reader of satire laugh. Thus Pope emphasized the intellectual quality of satire. He expected "the Great" to favour the poet who relies.

More on Reader's sense, than Gazer's eye.

The dramatist who stirs our emotions of pity and terror and carries the spectator with him deserves to be called a poet. But the author who relies on sense is in no way less important.<sup>58</sup> Sense or reason helps the reader to discern the shortcomings of the object satirized and feel indignation against it. But Pope expected more than that from satire. He expected it to reform. And to reform, he thought, it must touch the heart too. While defending his kind of satire Pope wrote :

Examples are pictures, and strike the senses, nay raise the Passions, and call in those (the strongest and most general of all motives) to the aid of reformation.<sup>59</sup>

He feels that reason by itself can help one to distinguish between right and wrong but it cannot stir one into activity without the aid of the heart. Thus his formula of "Truth" and "Sentiment", which he referred to in the advertisement to his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot",<sup>60</sup> equally applies to satire.

Dept. of English,  
Rajasthan University, Jaipur.



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3. Under exigencies of imitating Horace (Ep. II. i. 241ff) Pope had to show English satire of native growth : There is no reason to believe that he was of this view. See John Butt, *Twick*, IV, p. 215 n.
4. *Watson*, ii. 114
5. *Correspondence*, ed. George Sherburn, Oxford, 1956, iii 255 (Later on referred to as *Correspondence*)
6. Preface to "A Tale of a Tub".
7. "Epistle to Augustus", L. 262, *Twick*, IV, 217.
8. *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature*, Oxford, 1956, p. 182.
9. "Epilogue to the Satires. Dialogue II", 212-19, *Twick*, IV. 325.
10. *Twick*, IV. 3.
11. *Correspondence* iii. 366.
12. *The Critical Works of John Dennis* ed. E. N. Hooker, Baltimore, 1943, II, 218.
13. Dialogue I, 11-12, *Twick*, IV 298
14. Cf. Dryden in his "Discourse concerning Satire" while comparing Horace and Juvenal: "Horace is the more copious and profitable in his instructions of human life". *Watson*, ii. 27.
15. *The Cankered Muse : Satire of the English Renaissance*, New Haven, 1959, pp. 16 ff.
16. *Yale Review* 41 (1951-52), 80-92.
17. *The Cankered Muse*, p. 16 n.
18. *Correspondence*, iii. 423. Also Dia. II. 10-23, *Twick*, IV. 313-14.
19. *Correspondence*, iii. 419.
20. *The Dunciad*, *Twick*, V. p. 206.
21. i.e. *Gulliver's Travels*.
22. *Correspondence*, II 325.  
Swift was not content with hating the world. He wanted to anger it, if possible with safety. In fact, it was something deeper than what the word "hatred" is capable of conveying (See *Correspondence*, ii. 342,343). Though he was Dean of Christian Church—and there is no reason to doubt his Christianity—his misanthropy is incompatible with Christian philosophy.
23. *Correspondence*, ii. 333.
24. *Essay on Man*, IV. 396
25. *Correspondence*, ii. 343.
26. *Ibid*, ii. 413.
27. *Ibid*, ii. 332.
28. *Essay on Man*, II. 3, 13.
29. *Ibid*, I.16.
30. *Correspondence*, ii. 325.
31. Pope wrote to Allen on 6th July, 1738: The condition of Morality is so desperate, as to be above all Human Hands". *Correspondence*, iv. 109.



32. For Pope's skill in using names in the *Dunciad* see Robert W. Rogers, *The Major Satires of A. Pope*, Urbana, 1955, pp. 21-23. For use of names in the *Epistles* see F. W. Bateson (ed). *Twick.*, III, ii, p. xlv-xlviii.
33. See for example *Complaint and Satire*, p. 182.
34. *Correspondence*, iii, 276.
35. "Epilogue to the Satires" Dialogue II, 208-II.
36. *The Examiner and other Pieces written in 1710-11* ed. H. Davies, Oxford, 1957, p. 141.
37. *Correspondence*, iv, 289.
38. *Ibid.* iv, 437.
39. *Imitations of Horace*, *Twick.* IV, 327 n.
40. II, 248-49.
41. See *Twick*, IV, p. xl.
42. See p. 2, above.
43. *Imitations of Horace*, Ep. II i, 1. 221 *Twick*, IV, 213
44. "Epistle to Arbuthnot", II, 283-86. *Twick*, IV, 116
45. "Epistle to Arbuthnot", II 287-302 *Twick*, IV, 116-17
46. *Sat.* II, i 105-108, *Twick.*, IV 15.
47. "Epistle to Arbuthnot" 360-67, *Dia.* II 24-53. *Twick*, IV, 122, 314-15.
48. *Correspondence*, IV, 203, 207.
49. *Sat.* II, i, 1.121. *Twick*, IV, 17
50. *Correspondence*, iii, 116.
51. *Ibid.*, ii, 315.
52. "A Letter to the Publisher from William Cleland", *The Dunciad*, *Twick* V, 17.
53. Preface to the *Works of 1717*, *Twick.*, I 4.
54. See "Peri Bathous" ch. V. VII.
55. *Correspondence*, V, 3.
56. See the conclusion to the second "Dialogue". I am indebted to Robert W. Rogers (*The Major Satires of A Pope*. Urbana, 1955, p. 92) for this argument. Also Tillotson, while commenting on Pope's meaning of "Truth" says : "If we generalize and make it apply to his poems all together it will mean Nature addressing itself to man's head". (*Pope and Human Nature*, Oxford, 1958, p. 244).
57. *Correspondence*, V, 3.
58. *Imitations of Horace*, Ep. II, i. 340-51.
59. *Correspondence*, iii, 419.
60. For the meaning of "Truth" see above n. 56. At the same place Tillotson writes about Sentiment "that in both particular and general, (it) will mean Nature addressing it self to man's heart" (*Pope and Human Nature*, p. 244).







## T. S. ELIOT AND IRVING BABBITT

—*a question of critical influence*

MOHIT K. RAY

"The good critic—and we should all try to be critics, and not leave criticism to the fellows who write reviews in the papers—is the man who, to a keen and abiding sensibility, joins wide and increasingly discriminating reading. Wide reading is not valuable as a kind of hoarding, an accumulation of knowledge, or what sometimes is meant by the term 'a well-stocked mind.' It is valuable because in the process of being affected by one powerful personality after another, we cease to be dominated by any one, or by any small number. The very different views of life, habiting in our minds, affect each other, and our own personality asserts itself and gives each a place in some arrangement peculiar to ourself."

(Selected Essays pp. 395)

As Eliot himself acknowledges the influence of Babbitt on the development of his critical position is enormous. Eliot first came in contact with Babbitt when "Babbitt's reputation was only amongst a few" and "his outspoken contempt for methods of teaching in vogue had given him a reputation for unpopularity." But Eliot was attracted by the personality of this man and the course in French that Eliot was given by Babbitt proved a remarkable influence.

We must remember that Eliot came to Harvard at a time when he was still making up his mind about many important critical issues and he could hasten to his decision, because Babbitt emphatically pointed that way. How emphatically Babbitt asserted his convictions can be understood when we find Eliot struck by "the frankness with which he discussed the things he disliked and which his pupils came to dislike too."<sup>1</sup> Eliot further comments that in Babbitt he found not merely a tutor "but a man who directed my interests, at a particular moment, in such a way that the marks of that direction are still evident."<sup>2</sup>

The marks of that direction are to be found in Eliot's classicism and his insistence on tradition.



Babbitt is a classicist. He is antagonistic to romanticism as is Eliot. Rousseau, according to him, is the root of most of the romantic evils that afflict modern letters. Romanticism abandons all discipline, all intellectual destinations, all definiteness of purpose as mere shackles imposed on the free play of impulses. A romanticist is possessed by "‘elutheromacia’, the instinct to throw off not simply outer and artificial limitations, but all limitations whatsoever."<sup>3</sup>

As a classicist Babbitt is not satisfied with the prevailing values of the time. He offers, instead, the values of certain nations at certain moments of history and doctrines by which a writer may assimilate and communicate them. So he prescribes the study of the Greeks to those who want to know how to judge writing, for their work in all the arts was judicious, moderate, humane. He believes with Goethe that if "we are looking for masterpieces we must think neither of the Chinese, nor of the Servians, nor of Calderon, nor of the Niebelungenlied but must turn to the ancient Greeks, for in their work is found the model of man in his true beauty." In his *Literature and the American College* Babbitt urges the young writers to cultivate the classical spirit which "feels itself consecrated to the service of a high, impersonal reason." The sentiment of restraint and discipline, sense of proportion and pervading law only follow. Babbitt pleads for a humility that urges the individual to subordinate himself to some higher cause. We remember Eliot's dictum that the poet must surrender himself as he is at the moment to do something valuable.

What happens is a Continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable.<sup>4</sup>

Even the way Babbitt formulates his idea is very closely similar to Eliot's :

If the perception gains ground that man's knowledge of human nature is destined always to remain a mere glimpse and infinitesimal fragment, there may be hope of reaction against what we may call scientific Titanism. There might even be some recovery of that true humility—the inner obeisance of the spirit to do something higher than itself—that has almost become one of the lost virtues.<sup>5</sup>

Besides imbuing in Eliot a sense of restraint and distrust of emotions, Babbitt's classicism taught Eliot to concentrate on the essentials. But this does not in any way prevent Eliot from criticising his master when according to Eliot, he fails to practise his own doctrines :



His few books are important, and would be more important if he preached of discipline in a more disciplined style.<sup>6</sup>

Babbitt himself was not unaware of the sincerity and frankness of his disciple. Referring to Eliot he said once : "He begins his letters with 'Dear Master,' but he attacks me whenever he writes about me." But strictly speaking Eliot never attacked his master. He only disputed with his teacher and about the point to which Babbitt himself drew his attention. That is why later with the publication of *Democracy and Leadership* Eliot revises his opinion and recommends the book as one "which exemplified the severe and serve classified spirit."<sup>7</sup> As a staunch classicist Babbitt believes in tradition, and Eliot's idea of tradition and the sense of living past may have their sources in it. About Babbitt Eliot says,

He appears to perceive Europe as a whole, has the cosmopolitan mind and a tendency to seek the centre.<sup>8</sup>

Perceiving Europe as a whole Babbitt was painfully aware of the ills of the modern world. Eliot remarks :

Babbitt's motive was awareness of, alarm at, the ills of the modern world; and his work as a whole constitutes the most complete and thorough diagnosis of the malady, as it shows itself in literature, in education, in politics and philosophy, that has been made.<sup>9</sup>

The only cure, according to Babbitt, was through an understanding of the past. He demands an accurate inspection of the past with its instructive experience. Knowledge of history has to be used not for imitating dead geniuses but for doing one's own work in a better way :

What we are seeking is a critic who rests his discipline and selection upon the past with being a mere traditionalist; where holding of tradition involves a constant process of hard and clear thinking, a constant adjustment, in other words, of the experience of the past to the changing needs of the present.<sup>10</sup>

This might have been written by Eliot. The ideal traditionalist as Babbitt sees him, is the person who has succeeded in making all the valuable things of the past his own as well as in using them as a basis for the new creative work. This is, again, Eliot's conception of a traditional writer. The conception is crystalized in *Tradition and Individual Talent*. Babbitt finds his ideal of tradition realized in the figure of Goethe :



He has, as Sainte Beuve puts it, assimilated not merely tradition, but all traditions, and that without ceasing to be a modern of moderns; he keeps a watch for every new rail on the horizon, but from the height of a Sunium. He would use the larger background and perception to round out and support his individual insight and so make the present what it should be—not the servile imitation, nor again the blank denial of the past, but its creation continuation.<sup>11</sup>

It is only by assimilating tradition that one can become original and contribute something significant in modern literature. "There is needed in the classics today," Babbitt wrote, "a man who can understand the past with the result not of loosening but of strengthening his grasp upon the present."<sup>12</sup> Eliot corroborates this view when he says that the indispensable requisite for anyone "who would continue to be a poet beyond his twentyfifth year is "the historical sense" which "involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence," the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and compares a simultaneous order. The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity."<sup>13</sup>

Even the tasks and methods of criticism advocated by Babbitt correspond largely with what Eliot pleads for. Babbitt correspond largely with what Eliot pleads for. Babbitt believes that criticism should not be converted into history, biography or psychology, for "the very prosaic facts" that the historical or social critic is looking for, "would be at least as visible in the work of some mediocrity as in a work of the first order."<sup>14</sup> Babbitt discards the 'impressionistic' as well as 'scientific' criticism because they do not have definite standards.

If the impressionist is asked to rise above his sensibility and judge by a more impersonal standard, he answers that there is no such impersonal element in art, but only suggestiveness, and is almost ready to define art .... as an 'attenuated hypnosis'. If the scientific critic in turn is urged to get behind the phenomena and rate a book with reference to a scale of absolute values he absconds into his theory of the 'unknowable',<sup>15</sup>



This tallies with Eliot's objections to those critics who fail to arrive at any generalized statement of literary beauty.

It is perhaps the supreme difficulty of criticism to make the facts generalize themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Such a critic fails, because he is "unable to distinguish the poetry from an emotional state aroused in himself by the party, a state which may be merely an indulgence of his own emotions"<sup>17</sup>

Eliot believes that—

If he (the critic) is to justify his existence (he) should endeavour to discipline his personal prejudices and cranks-ares to which we all are subject—and compare his differences with as many of his fellows as possible, in the common pursuit of true judgment.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless Babbitt condemns standards that are entirely outside the individual. He believes the right mean to be "in a standard that is in the individual and yet is felt by him to transcend his personal self and lay hold of that part of his nature that he possesses in common with other men."<sup>19</sup>

Eliot seems to agree with this view when he says :

The critic.....must have other interests, Just as much as the poet himself, for the literary critic is not merely a technical expert who has learned the rules to be observed by the writers he criticizes: The critic must be the whole man, a man with convictions and principles, and of knowledge and experience of life.<sup>20</sup>

And again :

If in literary criticism, we place all the emphasis upon *understanding* we are in danger even of pursuing criticism as if it was a science, which it never can be. If, on the other hand we overemphasize *enjoyment* we will tend to fall into the subjective and impressionistic and our enjoyment will profit us no more than mere amusement and pastime.<sup>21</sup>

Eliot considers Babbitt as one of the two wisest men of Europe, who mattered. Yet the disciple deviates remarkably from the master. But these deviations are not actually departures. Working on the lines offered by Babbitt, Eliot reached the conclusions often differently.



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  3. *The New Laokoon*, p. 196.
  4. *The Sacred Wood*, pp. 52-53.
  5. *The Neo Laokoon*, p. 211.
  6. *The Sacred Wood*, p. 42.
  7. Notes on some Figures behind T. S. Eliot, p. 134
  8. *The Sacred Wood*, p. 42, "to seek the centre" : one recalls in this connection Babbitt's prolonged differentiation in *Rousseau and Romanticism* between a romanticist's 'look to a centre' and a classicist's 'look to a truce centre.'
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## KEATS' SENSUOUSNESS RE-DEFINED

by

KRISHNA BAGCHI

The myth that Keats was a poet of sensuousness, no poet of thought, needs now to be dismissed, or understood better. His sensuousness 'intensifies' into supra-sensuousness, just to be explained, and there ever rolled 'A vast idea'<sup>1</sup> before him. Without the one he would have remained a mere hedonist and without the other a bore; he would have ceased growing. Suprasensuousness put him closer to the heart of existence and thought made him an integral part of world-life. It was such burden that made him the poet that he is.

Apparently, Keats' poetry (and its imagery) is based on his pagan-like enjoyment or experience of the sensuous qualities of things their form, colour, taste, smell, sound and surface-touch; even love's passion and simple narrative take on sensuous imagery. But what really happens (and it is borne out both by Keats' life and poetry) is that through the sensuousness of things, even the sensuousness of human relationships (Keats was so deeply attached to his brothers) and of love (Fanny Brawne), Keats transcends sensuousness itself passing into a sort of finer sense, not the ear hearing the music but the spirit listening to ditties of no tone :

every sense

Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude.<sup>2</sup>

"From the eyesight proceeds", as Whitman wrote in his Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, "another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man." "Full alchemiz'd, and free of space",<sup>3</sup> Keats attains "A fellowship with essence".<sup>4</sup> "If a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel,"<sup>5</sup> once wrote Keats. The moment he feels the soothing touch of the 'rose leaf', 'the airy stress of music's Kiss',... that moment he steps :

Into a sort of oneness, and our State  
Is like a floating spirit's.<sup>6</sup>



It is a journey inward, or depthward. (Keats was a 'mental traveller'?) And it is a strange journey; the poet moving into the inner core of his own being—'the very bourne of heaven'<sup>8</sup> and at the same time into the inner core of the thing: a strange, paradoxical identity is achieved. Simply put, it is the phenomenon of a 'transformed' consciousness: a heightened, aestheticised, 'divinized' consciousness: it is living in gusto; it is Bergson's 'intuition', Wordsworth's 'Spots of Time', what Kenneth Burke, referring to Keats in his *Grammar of Motives*, has called the point of 'mystic oxymoron'<sup>9</sup> the point where the mystic interfusion of contraries (the subjective and the objective, the dream and the real) takes place, and to which and no further, Keats said, human imagination occasionally and momentarily rises:

Melting into its *radiance*, we blend  
Mingle and so become a part of it.<sup>10</sup>

Such visionary experience is the basic core of Keats' poetry. The very first poem, in his "Poems published in 1817", had it, where his spiritualised sense [the expression, 'spiritualized' whatever it may mean,—perhaps refined, etherialised, divinised—is Keats' own from the concluding passage of his *Endymion*:

And then was fit that from this mortal State  
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change  
Be spiritualiz'd ] (Book IV, ll. 991—93)

hears the "noiseless noise among the leaves"<sup>11</sup> and, "the very sigh that silence heaves"<sup>12</sup> and where

...the voice of crystal bubbles  
Charms us at once away from all our troubles;  
So that we feel uplifted from the world,  
Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd  
and curl'd.<sup>13</sup>

And we see Psyche moving

On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment<sup>14</sup>

and hear of a soul going into 'how sweet a trance.'<sup>15</sup>

In his "Sleep And Poetry" we hear of a thought coming

...sometimes like a gentle whispering  
Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing  
That breathes about us in the vacant air.<sup>16</sup>



( 105 )

And find imagination showing us everything  
 From the clear space of ether, to the small  
 Breath of new buds unfolding.<sup>17</sup>

In these poems it is not only the sensuousness of things that dispatches him to the finer sense, the phenomenal vastness and ghostliness :

The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,  
 Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears  
 Must think on what will be, and what has been;<sup>18</sup>

'the smile of the blue firmament',<sup>19</sup> and a sound rolling round 'Eternally around a dizzy void,'<sup>20</sup> too do it. May-be it is so far only a play of fancy and the real apprehension is yet to come. His first important poem 'Endymion' which to me seems to hold the seeds of all his later poetry often lands us into the veritable realm of the Unconscious,—a thesis that has been very well argued out by Dr. Miss Katherine M. Wilson.<sup>21</sup> The Shepherd-Prince Endymion moves out in quest of his lady : there are journeys through dark deep caves and ethereal regions: the very similitudes of the various planes in the unconscious (Freud must be thankful); and at one point suddenly

The visions of the earth were gone and fled—  
 He saw the giant sea above his head.<sup>22</sup>

It is really an exact description of the mind getting oblivious of the physical reality around and slipping into the deeps of the unconscious. Then, Endymion's Hymn to Pan, sung by the Latmian Shepherds, has the following passage: which obviously betrays some preternatural experience on the part of the poet :

Be still the unimaginable lodge  
 For solitary thinkings; such as dodge  
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,  
 Then leave the naked brain; be still the leaven,  
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth  
 Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth  
 Be still a symbol of immensity  
 A firmament reflected in a sea,  
 An element filling the space between;  
 An unknown—but no more :<sup>23</sup>

——“but no more” is significant. The poet's mind seems to have been so over-awed by 'Immensity' that he cries out for a halt: he



cannot bear the experience any further. A ray from the archetypal realm of the Unconscious (why not call it the Higher mind or the Supra-conscious ?) touches the dull mind of every-day normal awareness, works in it as leaven and transforms it: The mind becomes a 'sea' and it reflects the 'Immense One'. Pan turns out to be the dread opener of the mysterious doors leading to universal knowledge, and Cynthia the principal metaphor to describe the heightened state of awareness and the symbol of its (awareness) chief intensity. The Conscious or Unconscious dramatization of the sensuous leading to the supra sensuous, is the essential theme also of the major odes of Keats: The mellifluous song of the Nithtingale lifts him to the 'melodious plot', symbolizing a plane of consciousness risen above the weariness, the fever and the fret of life; even the white hawthorn, "pastoral eglantine", fast-fading violets, "the music-rose full of dewy wine", 'the murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves' indicate no mere rolling in sensuous luxuriance but a sort of richer entanglement in which the poet is one with the soul of existence, a oneness felt just when the Nightingale poured forth her soul abroad." "In such an ecstasy :'' The Grecian Urn—that object in beauty formed—about whose shape haunt leaf-fringed legends and sensuous images of music; pipes ond, timbrels and of mad pursuits of love must, like eternity, tease us out of thought, and lift us into that supernal realm of imagination where we do realize that unheard melodies are sweeter than the heard ones and wish that ditties of 'no tone' be piped not to the sensual ear but to our Spirit. Although hemmed in by all sensuous luxuriance—Zephyrs, streams and birds and bees—Psyche's temple shall ultimately have to be built "In some untrodden region of my mind." Fellowship with the divine could be attained there alone. The 'Ode On Indolence' only enacts that moment of intensity in which one passes 'into a sort of oneness' and which comes without warning in a condition of indolence; indolence, which Keats sometimes calls "abstraction", implying "a state of perfect freedom from emotional, intellectual or moral commitments"<sup>24</sup> —a sort of trance, leaving "my sense unhaunted quite of all but-nothingness". The wonder of a balance ('thou dost keep Steady thy laden head across a brook between the inner commotion and the external object, a sense of calm all passion spent, is ideally achieved in the "Ode to Autumn"—a symbol of a peculiarly unified sensibility. I doubt if any metaphysical poet had ever achieved it. In a way it was not a self-losing but the realization of harmony between soul



and sensuousness. 'Reconcentration' at a higher level might have been the theme of Hyperion as well.<sup>25</sup> It is no conflict between the real and the ideal that Keats' major poems embody but essentially, a release from the sensuous into the suprasensuous, a slipping from the work-a-day consciousness into a divinized consciousness.

Recent work on Keats has shown that "sensation" as Keats uses it would today be more likely called intuition. His "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts."<sup>26</sup> is "a plea not for hedonism but for the direct contact with reality: "when the objects of sense laid their spell upon him, he was so stirred and exalted that he felt himself transported to another world... Sight and touch and smell awoke his imagination to a sphere in which he saw vast issues ....The more intensely a beautiful object affected him, the more convinced he was that he had passed beyond it to something else."<sup>27</sup> "It seems clear" writes Louis MacNeice, "that Keats was what may be called a mystic through the medium of senses. I would agree upto a point, therefore, with the Abbe Bremond that there is something in Keats' poetry akin to prayer, a kind of religious incantation".<sup>28</sup> Professor G. W. Knight too testifies to the 'ritualistic' tone of Keats' poetry, saying, "Poetic sensuousness becomes a perfect medium for spiritual transmission."<sup>29</sup> The Hindu Brahma too is there; "Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans".<sup>30</sup> May I surmise that Keats may have heard something about the Hindu way of meditation and Yoga? The various regions—bowers and caves—Endymion arrives at in the course of his journey could symbolize the various planes of consciousness the man of meditation passes through. At one point Endymion arrives at a place where :

..... His every sense had grown  
Ethereal for pleasure.<sup>31</sup>

and

...to his capable ears  
Silence was music from the holy spheres.<sup>32</sup>

It is very much like a Yogi's experience of Quietude; Endymion too passes through the "Cave of Quietude." Wasserman talks of the empathic entrance of the poet into the essence of things and an enthrallment in the essence of the sensuous—the act of freeing the self of its identity and its existence in time and space and consequent mystic absorption into the essence of outward forms. He writes, "Etherealizing real things and nothing by intensity—or, as he wrote in



"Sleep And Poetry", seizing the events of the world and then teasing his spirit until it has wings 'to find out an immortality'—was more than a system of poetic symbolisation to Keats. It was his religion."<sup>33</sup> And further, "The Odes on the Urn and the Nightingale, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', and 'The Eve of St. Agnes' were religious experiences almost terrifying to their maker."<sup>34</sup> In an interesting article "Keats a Zen", Richard P. Benton shows that, "he (Keats) achieved a genuine loss of self-identity and reached the ideal Zen state of being—transcendence of the dichotomy between the self and not self."<sup>35</sup>

Not that Keats decries the sensuous; in fact he passionately enjoyed his food and drink and the lusciousness of things—delicious sounds, light feet, dark violet eyes, white neck and creamy breast :

Talking of Pleasure, this moment I was writing with one hand, and with the other holding to my Mouth a Nectarine—good god how fine. It went down soft pulpy, slushy, oozy—all its delicious embonpoint melted down my throat like a large beautified Strawberry.<sup>36</sup>

Only that this passionate enjoyment transmutes itself into a sort of communion, a consecration and a rite. "Corn is the sacramental food, wine is the sacramental drink."<sup>37</sup> One is for the body, the other for the soul: "The madness of the grape is the madness of the poetic frenzy; it is also, as many religions have seen, the madness of noesis and participation of the divine nature."<sup>38</sup> The gates of perception are cleansed, as with Blake, by an "improvement of sensual enjoyment" One should enjoy Keats's sensuousness but one would miss the truth if one did not realise that in this intense sensuousness itself one tastes the essence of existence. "Essence" is the key to Keats's poetry. Touching through *heightened consciousness* (Imagination) the essence of the thing and through it the essence of the self—that is Keats.

The trouble with Keats, as perhaps with most of us, is that our life's joy is in passionate experience which, unfortunately, is transient: man grows old and beauty loses its lustrous eyes. Can ever the experience be lasting ?

Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure ?  
O that I could not doubt !<sup>39</sup>

Keats testifies that in the very intensity of experience, resulting in intense imaginative activity or heightening of consciousness, sensuous-



ness—earthiness—is transcended; we become full alchemized and free of space, and in the act of our being's transformation the very object or the loved one that originally moved the imagination is apotheosized. Then, for us mortal and immortal, the temporal and a-temporal, beauty and truth are one. Despite the *earth's* gravitational pull we don't deny that the leafy plot is melodious, unheard melodies are sweeter, Psyche's fane comes up, and a perfection treads our heels.

I have not discussed Keats' thought; that could be taken up some other time.

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**Book Review :****ROOT AND BRANCH**

HUGO WOLFRAM,

*Longmans, 40 S.*

*Root and Branch* tells the story of a group of immigrants successfully settled in England. Yet it is a sad story since these uprooted people carry with them a world of memories, feelings of love and loyalty, of hatred and guilt that won't let them rest. They survive the political, social and financial crises but succumb to their own mental storms.

Bernard Herz, a liberal Jew and a doctor by profession, finds his surroundings turning hostile under the Nazi regime. He is intelligent enough to foresee the anti-semitic campaign. Moreover, by virtue of having married an English born woman he has some place to run away to. He is further helped in this escapade by his German housekeeper Zitta (engaged to a Nazi officer), whom he had found homeless and ill on his doorstep with her daughter Anna some years back and who since then has been extremely devoted to him.

The family has other peculiar features too. Edna, the doctor's wife, had fits of madness and hence could hardly look after her son Francis and daughter Olivia. Zitta had suffered from amnesia soon after Anna's birth and so she didn't know who her father was. Meanwhile Anna was being brought up along with the doctor's children and being senior to Francis and Olivia was very protective towards them. Having lived with them since her childhood she preferred to go to England with the doctor's family rather than stay behind with her mother and step-father.

Dr. Herz's relatives in England are far from being cordial as he feared, but he is resourceful and lucky to get a loan of £ 250,000 to start business and sets out on the road to becoming a plastic magnate. Anna, Zitta's daughter, in her efforts to be herself in an alien land takes to miming for private amusement but later on when she is interned during the war she gets a chance to develop her talent and under the care of Bruno, a stage director, grows into a fine actress rich and famous.



For all his wealth Bernard is not a happy man. His wife gets worse and has to be sent to a lunatic asylum. Francis who studies at Cambridge and Olivia who joins an arts school are bitter to the father and hostile to each other. Francis's love and Olivia's hatred for Anna further complicate the situation. Anna loves Francis but turns down his proposal of marriage for reasons of political and social insecurity. She is haunted by her anonymous paternity, at times wonders if Dr. Herz is not her father. Nevertheless, she continues to feel for Francis.

Olivia, who hates Anna for being good and successful, in her bid to estrange Anna and Francis, introduces Julia, a shallow girl of ex-colonial class and a Lesbian, to her brother. Francis falls into the trap and marries Julia. Julia is successful in her attempt to acquire wealth and social prestige, since Dr. Herz is now a millionaire and Francis himself a treasury officer. Being what she is Julia frequently creates scenes by accusing Francis of having illicit relations with Anna. On the other hand, however intensely Anna may love Francis she is determined that she is not going to marry Francis. She is helping her step-father who is a wanted Nazi war criminal, now hiding in Argentina. By giving a physical clue he has somehow convinced her that he is her father. Anna decides to leave London, her stage and Francis too to join her criminal father. Francis also makes a terrible decision. He takes a heavy dose of sleeping pills and drives to a deliberate accident. He kills himself to freedom. What would Anna and Olivia, the branches of the same tree, do ? How would they find their peace with life ?

Obviously, the novelist's focus is not on the political catastrophe, nor on the social conflicts either. The searchlight is on the perturbed minds that react in all sorts of ways. For all its historical background and documentary style the novel seems to suggest that after all an individual may be an individual. Dr. Bernard Herz was not just a Jew like any other Jew. "He had never been actively Jewish. He didn't attend services even at the Reform Synagogues. Why should he be forced to identify himself with these people most of whom hadn't lived in Germany for more than a few generations, who had different ways of looking at things, who believed in strong family ties, the importance of wealth, insane dietary rules, mutilation at birth, who tended to be loud, flashy and undisciplined when he



liked being inconspicuous and quietly strict. Of course he had Jewish friends, but they weren't friends because they were Jewish.<sup>3</sup> Bernard is an individual and so are Anna, Francis and Olivia. The novelist's primary interest is to probe the inner life of these characters, their attitudes, their loves and hates and jealousies, to explain their strange behaviour, as for instance, why Zitta, although a German, risks everything for the Jewish family's safe transit, or why Alice hates Anna, or why Julia is a Lesbian. There is little plain narrative in the book. Most of the events are psychoanalysed with reference to one character or another within the framework of Freudian psychology. Of course it is the psychology of the displaced people but the emphasis is on the essential human ailments and not their being victims of a mass crime. In fact, this family hardly suffered the Nazi atrocities. Dr. Bernard eventually and ironically gained by it, at least materially. From an ordinary medico in Berlin to a business magnate in Britain is certainly a rise. It is another matter that this material success enhances their private tragedies.

The psychological realism of the novel is reflected in chapter divisions and titles too. Each chapter allows additional glimpses of one of the main characters, although all the sides of these extremely complex aliens are not illumined. All the same, these part revelations do deepen our awareness of the mystery that a human mind is and can be.

Unlike many psychological novels, *Root and Branch* has vividness and flow of narrative. The novelist has avoided description and long stretches of narrative or interior monologue. He has sometime split a single event in as many as 6 or 7 chapters and juxtaposed it with other split events, perhaps to avoid monotony and suggest simultaneity of events.

The use of time element is another interesting thing to note. The story begins at the end but it does not move backwards chronologically. Actually, there is a point in the story that throughout remains present, and there is another which is forever past. Along-with the constant past and constant present there is a time movement from distant to immediate past and another from present towards future. Obviously the story does not get unfolded in a straight narrative; the reader constructs it for himself by reaching a point where all these four movements of time intersect. What happens is



something like what Paul, a friend of Francis, experiences in the novel while listening to his wife's account of her meeting with Francis. "Everything is in confusion, the pieces are flung out of the box, then settle into a fine mosaic pattern." Discussions, dialogues, interior monologues, diaries and letters are rather ingeniously woven together to maintain a steady flow of the story.

Yet another aspect of the technique is the introduction of characters like Paul. Warburton and his wife Frieda who enable us to measure the deviations of other characters from normality.

The lucid style of the novel, I think, is well suited to the tale of socio-psychological conflicts among immigrants. One comes across extremely cinematic narratives in the unfolding of the inner drama. Among the very few similes that the writer uses most refer to the paintings of Van Gogh, Hans Thomas, Titian, Goya, Degas, etc.

Dept. of English,  
Rajasthan University  
Jaipur.

—*R. P. Rama*



## Book Review :

## THE PRACTICE OF CRITICISM

D.W. RAWLINSON,

*Cambridge, 1968.*

'How to Read a Poem' is a puzzle for which a large number of solutions have been offered. This book is one modest effort in that direction. It has greater relevance for those teaching in India because the author's experiments were conducted in Singapore and the conditions here are not very different from those prevailing in our neighbouring country. For instance, the author rightly suggests that the poems which have a distinctly English background should be avoided because many students in the Commonwealth countries have never seen "a Colliery town, a London fog or a daffodil".

Rawlinson's book presents I.A. Richards in a new bottle. The author rightly says that the concern with rhymes, scansion, metre and such other externals is the easiest way to avoid the trouble of imaginatively entering a poem. In saying this he keeps Richards at the back of his mind : "We are busy with lapels and buttons when we do not know what else to do with a poem." Richards' favourite idea that the auditory images have great importance in the reading of a poem makes a backdoor entry in this book. Rawlinson tells us that we should avoid the dangers of eye-reading and that visualisation is not always a help in the reading of a poem. But the use of a new word like 'eye-reading' does not mean a new idea and Rawlinson should have expressed his debt to Richards who already said : "We should give the poem a slow, loud incantatory reading." In any case, the ghost of Richards haunts all the pages though he is mentioned on very few.

But Rawlinson's application of Richards is very sound. He rightly asks us to avoid stock questions like : "Which of these two similar poems is the more successful ?" In Denys Thompson's *Reading and Discrimination*, this question is not only asked again and again but the poem's superiority is also determined on the basis of a strait-jacket formula viz. that a great poem should be able to



combine love and geometry. Rawlinson challenges this dogmatic approach and suggests that we must often ask : "What has each poet, in his own different way and with his own different resources, been able to achieve ?" This is a healthy approach because it prevents our minds from getting conditioned in certain pre-determined channels. These days if we ask a student to compare Ben Jonson's 'To Heaven' with Donne's 'Thou hast made me', he invariably answers that Donne's poem is superior because it employs intricate metaphors. This judgment is unfair to Jonson whose directness of statement has its own charm. But many teachers who apply Practical Criticism unimaginatively believe that a great poem always has great metaphors and this makes many simple students accept the naive assumption that poetry and metaphor are the same thing.

To avoid these misconceptions, a practical criticism course should enable a student to cultivate receptivity and flexibility. It should not degenerate into a dogmatic formula. Most people regard practical criticism either as a set of rules for understanding a poem or they regard it as a measuring-rod whereby they can determine the value of a poem. Rawlinson dispels this wrong notion by regarding it as a humanistic activity which enables one to discover one's true self.

The chief value of this book lies in the way in which the author varies his strategy in the various exercises. He conducts different types of experiment in the same class. To illustrate Coleridge's dictum that "In great poets, there is reason not only for every word but for the position of every word" he gives two drafts of Blake's 'London' and asks why Blake makes these changes. In the other exercise, he gives five translations of the same Latin poem by Wyatt, Heywood, Cowley, G. Granville and Marvell and then asks us to compare the five different versions of the same idea. In two poems by Hardy entitled 'The Shadow on the Stone' and 'The Voice', we are asked where the idiosyncrasy becomes a virtue and where a gimmick. Another interesting exercise is based on Kipling's 'Epitaphs of the War', wherein he asks the students to determine which epitaph is more effective. Such a confrontation compels the student to make his choice—a sort of training which practical criticism is supposed to give.



To the usual categories of criticism like rhythm, tone, imagery and metaphor, Rawlinson has added two more categories—those of relevance and creation. He tests his criterion of relevance by examining the irrelevant comments of his students, made on Blake's brilliant poem 'The Human Abstract'. The choice in this case is very apt because Blake's approach is not sentimental. He feels the predicament of the human situation and expresses the truth in all its nakedness. Eliot once criticized Coleridge because "his centre of interest changes, his feelings are impure". Such a phenomenon can easily take place in a Blake poem because there are so many wayside temptations either to analyse metaphors and symbols or to reduce the poem to a simple human proposition. Rawlinson has exposed these bi-polar misunderstandings by giving his own brilliant analysis of the poem.

The other important distinction introduced by Rawlinson is one between statement and creation. It is not easy to draw the line between a poem that comes alive and one that is merely 'prose run mad'. The author illustrates this phenomenon by comparing six poems. In the first two poems, he compares the self-idealising rhetoric of Elizabeth Barret Browning in her 'Irreparableness' with the moving simplicity of George Herbert in his 'Life'. The former suffered from sentimentality and did not know how to get rid of the poetic. On the other hand, Herbert knew how to elevate the commonplace into the poetic.

But Herbert himself was not always successful. He wrote good and bad poems on the same theme. The former were truly creative, the latter only gave the impression of being so. His stock theme—the difficulties of living the religious life—inspired two poems, 'Nature' and 'The Collar'. Yet the rebellion against God in 'Nature' is nothing short of journalistic reportage, while that in the latter poem, shows his great capacity for passionate feeling.

This mysterious alchemy is further illustrated by comparing two poems by Robert Frost and Edward Thomas. "The just and general voice of mankind" may admire Frost's 'The Road Not Taken' but the poem is just a collection of clichés about life's uncertainties; on the other hand, Thomas enters fully in his poem 'The Sign-Post' and brings the same subject alive because he identifies himself with his inner misgivings.



Rawlinson's book breaks new ground in so far as he emphasises that Donne, Hopkins and Eliot are not the only norms. His heroes are Ben Jonson, Herbert and Blake. In having emphasised the other point of view, he exposes the futility of normative judgments in criticism. In any case, these norms have validity only when they follow sensible, critical analysis.

This book reinforces Richards' earlier conviction that literature should be treated as a means of doing our own "intellectual and emotional navigation". But Rawlinson doesn't share Richards's distrust of the judgment of other critics. He doesn't mind quoting F.R. Leavis or Yvor Winters and implicitly asserts that there is no harm in knowing their views as long as we can prove (or disprove them) on our own pulse. There is no harm in knowing how a poem strikes the other mind as long as we can treat Leavis as an elderly student of our practical criticism class. The real danger is in naive, credulous acceptance of the point of view of others. Rawlinson rightly says : "Looking at the tepid, derivative writing that students produce so much of, one sees how hard it is to make people respond to literature at that personal, intimate level at which they are truly themselves, where their real sympathies and antipathies come into play, and where their thoughts and feelings are completely their own, whatever they may owe to the critics they have read". In analysing the misunderstandings of his own students and in providing his own intimate, personal response, he has suggested a few more possibilities of discovering our own selves by coming into contact with great poems.

Dept. of English,  
Rajasthan University  
Jaipur.

—Chetan Karnani



**Book Review :****ARROWS OF INTELLECT**

ASLOOB AHMAD ANSARI,

*Naya Kitab Ghar, Aligarh, 1965.*

Professor Ansari's book *Arrows of Intellect* is not only a comprehensive study of William Blake—the poet mystic who rose against all the pressures of the material world of his times—but also a delightful survey of the whole Romantic period. William Blake's work stands unique in English literature for no one saw life quite in the same way as he did. For his divine frenzy he was taken to be insane. Prof. Ansari's study puts the great poet-prophet in the right perspective. Regarding the genesis of the book the author says: 'The more I studied Blake the greater the conviction grew upon me that he is not the isolated and untroubled visionary he has been made out to be but that he has a more than lively sense of the complex issues of his age though he articulated his insights in a strange and unfamiliar vocabulary.'

In Chapter I, of the five chapters into which the book is divided, the author traces the intellectual background—the mechanistic scheme evolved by Bacon, Newton, and Locke against which the poet reacted. This leads on in Chapter II to the different directions pointed out by this protest. These early chapters in which Prof. Ansari has built up his background to present Blake's concept of imagination—which the poet characteristically calls 'Arrows of Intellect' because of its power—present a lucid survey of the materialistic cosmos of the 18th century which as Blake felt, held out a dismal prospect before man as far as his inner life was concerned.

In Chapters III & IV the author looks back to the mystic origins of the material world—the myth of the Fall as seen by Blake. This has a direct bearing on the poet's gospel of imagination.

The chapter on Wordsworth and Coleridge in which the author has tried to correlate Wordsworth's and Coleridge's concepts of imagination with Blake's is highly stimulating. Of all the romantics



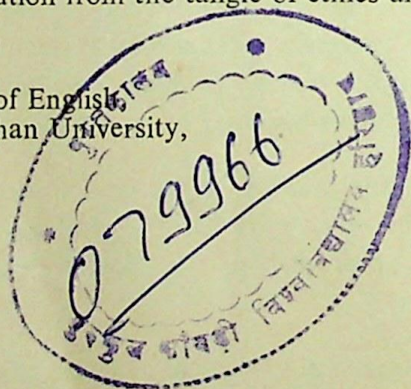
Blake is the most rigorous in his concept of imagination. In the words of Prof. Ansari, 'Imagination for Blake is the *elan vital* of Bergson.'

The best part of the work is Chapter VI in which the author examines in detail the three long poems—*Milton*, *Jerusalem* and *Four Zoas* hitherto treated cursorily by the critics. The chapter points to the apocalyptic nature of the imagination. Satanic wheels, man destroying Jerusalem and building Babylon—this for Blake is the fruit of reason uncontrolled. Albion *could* become Jerusalem through the proper exercise of the imagination, but it could also become Babylon, the wilderness of squalor and exploitation which the poet saw the rulers of England creating around him. The building of Jerusalem, the confounding of Babylon, is the outcome of the eternal yet ever shifting conflict between Urizen-Jehovah, the creator and oppressor, the god of things as they are, and Orc, a Promethean figure, redeemer and regenerator who elsewhere stands for fire and revolutionary terror. Blake sees the conflict as fought simultaneously on a number of planes, as a conflict of cosmic forces, but no less as a conflict in society and in the minds of men. Prof. Ansari rightly points to these aspects of the Blakean world. But the fact after all remains that Jerusalem is only an abstraction veiled in a fog of words.

Prof. Ansari's *Arrows of Intellect* is that rare thing—an original book on Blake that is scholarly and at the same time stimulating. The book not only throws new and fresh light on Blake's poetry but also succeeds entirely in disengaging the concept of imagination from the tangle of ethics and metaphysics in which it lay buried.

Dept. of English,  
Rajasthan University,  
Jaipur.

—Kashi Prasad.









PRINTED AT  
THE RAJASTHAN UNIVERSITY PRESS  
JAIPUR











Compiled  
1999-2000



